

Giving Thanks



Gratitude is a way for people to appreciate what they have instead of always reaching for something new in the hopes it will make them happier or thinking they can't feel satisfied until every physical and material need is met. Gratitude helps people refocus on what they have instead of what they lack. And, although it may feel contrived at first, this mental state grows stronger with use and practice.

Here are some ways to cultivate gratitude on a regular basis.

Write a thank-you note. You can make yourself happier and nurture your relationship with another person by writing a thank-you letter or email expressing your enjoyment and appreciation of that person's impact on your life. Send it, or better yet, deliver and read it in person if possible. Make a habit of sending at least one gratitude letter a month. Once in a while, write one to yourself.

Thank someone mentally. No time to write? It may help just to think about someone who has done something nice for you, and mentally thank the individual.

Keep a gratitude journal. Make it a habit to write down or share with a loved one thoughts about the gifts you've received each day.

Meditate. Mindfulness meditation involves focusing on the present moment without judgment. Although people often focus on a word or phrase (such as "peace"), it is also possible to focus on what you're grateful for (the warmth of the sun, a pleasant sound, etc.).

In this issue:

Page 1

Giving Thanks
Your IMA Chapter Board Members

Page 2

President's Message

Page 3-4

Shorebirds Event

Page 5

Awards, Recognition and Plain Great Stuff!

Page 6-14

Strategic Finance Article: How AI is Redefining the Future of Financial Planning and Analysis

Your IMA Chapter Board

President: Jesse Reid, MBA, CPA

Past-President: Bill Perry, CPA, CMA, CFM, CAPP, CGMA

Treasurer: Lorie Phillips, MBA, CPA, CIA, CIDA

Secretary: Kate Reinert, MBA, CMA

VP of Professional Education: Tracy Schoenbauer, CPA

VP of Membership: Christina Burke, MBA, CPA

VP of Communication: Christie Jensen, CMA

VP of CMA Awards: Jim Kaylor, MBA, CMA

VP of Young Professionals: John Muto, CPA

President's Message



Jesse Reid, CPA, MBA
Delmarva Chapter President

Happy Fall everyone and welcome to the Delmarva Chapter of the Institute of Management Accountants. I am excited and honored to serve as your Chapter President for another year. We have a great Board of Directors that have committed to providing you with quality continuing professional education and a rewarding networking environment. Your Delmarva board has been hard at work planning for this upcoming chapter year and will continue to schedule monthly speakers and keep you informed of any upcoming chapter events. Please go to Events & Education/Chapter Events for details. If you would like to find out more about our chapter or about becoming a member, we encourage you to contact us.

Who are we and what do we do?

The Delmarva Chapter of the IMA is a non-profit organization committed to providing educational, networking, and leadership opportunities to accounting professionals on the Delmarva Peninsula. We welcome accounting professionals from industry, public accounting, and academic fields.

The mission of our chapter is to promote accounting knowledge, provide educational opportunities, and serve the community through:

- Chapter meetings that include speakers on relevant accounting, tax, and business topics.
- Providing low cost continuing education programs for members and non-members.
- Supporting nearby IMA student chapters by providing speakers and inviting student members and faculty advisors to Delmarva Chapter functions.
- Partnering with other organizations to sponsor educational programs.
- Soliciting ideas from other chapters and the National Organization on effective programs.
- Using chapter funds when available to support scholarships and educational activities.
- Promotion of the Certified Management Accounting program.
- Providing volunteer accounting and tax expertise in the community to individuals and small businesses.
- Providing professional networking opportunities for members.

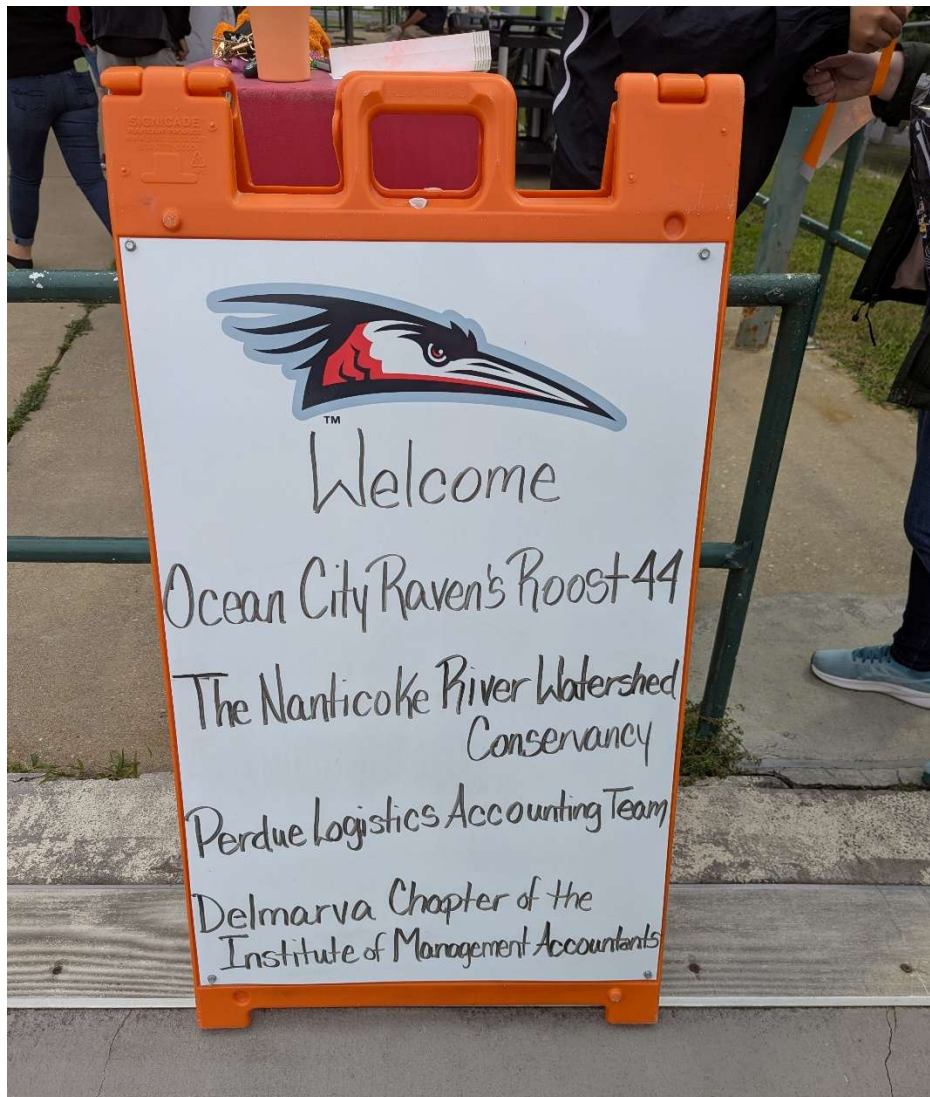
Jesse Reid, CPA, MBA
Delmarva Chapter President

Connect with Us



Shorebirds Event

The Delmarva Chapter of the IMA held an outing on August 21st at Perdue Stadium to see the Delmarva Shorebirds take on the Kannapolis Cannon Ballers. It was a beautiful night, slightly overcast as we took advantage of the unseasonably cool weather. Multiple attendees and their families joined the festivities and enjoyed unlimited burgers, dogs, pulled chicken BBQ, and sides along with tea and lemonade. While the conversation and fellowship were enjoyable, the Shorebirds were a little flat and lost 8-2. The highlights of the evening were being able to relax and meet family members of the IMA board and a visit from Sherman the Shorebird himself! Thanks to all who participated and made the event special! What a nice way to wrap up the summer and we hope to see you at future events.





Check out the IMA website for more information! www.imanet.org

Awards, Recognition, and Plain Great Stuff!



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA

IMA Chapter Awards

We will keep you posted on future awards.

New CMA Licenses

We will keep you posted on future licenses.

Recent Educational Achievements

Please submit any completions that may have been missed to Christie Jensen at cjensencma@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

We will keep you posted on future events.

If you would like to share any "Plain Great Stuff" in the next Dispatch, please email cjensencma@gmail.com.

How AI is Redefining the Future of Financial Planning and Analysis

Transforming financial planning and analysis with AI-driven insights.

July 9, 2025

By: Ayman Abdellatef, CMA, CPF, MBA – Strategy and Finance.

He currently works as an FP&A consultant.

The fusion of artificial intelligence (AI) with traditional business functions is no longer a futuristic concept—it is reshaping industries today. Across sectors, AI drives efficiency, precision, and strategic transformation. From optimizing logistics at DHL, where AI reduced left turns in delivery routes and cut fuel consumption, to boosting profitability at JD.com, where AI-powered cost-saving initiatives contributed to a 92% increase in profits, the adoption of AI showcases its game-changing potential.

Finance is no exception. The financial planning and analysis (FP&A) function, pivotal for organizational decision making, stands at the threshold of a revolution. Traditionally reliant on manual processes and static models, FP&A now faces unprecedented challenges: market volatility, data silos, and increasing demands for real-time insights. In response, AI offers a pathway to unprecedented agility and intelligence, empowering finance teams to navigate complexity with confidence.

This article explores how AI is transforming FP&A. It addresses long-standing pain points and equips organizations to thrive in an ever-evolving business landscape.

The current state of FP&A

The FP&A function today remains heavily reliant on traditional methods such as spreadsheet-based planning, static budgeting, and variance analysis. While these techniques have provided structure and consistency, they often struggle to adapt to the pace of modern business dynamics.

Budgeting, for instance, often involves siloed efforts across departments. Teams prepare individual segments of the budget, which are then consolidated into a master plan. This approach, while systematic, is time-intensive and prone to mismatches. Misalignments often arise between operational demand forecasts and financial plans. Since sales and operations planning (S&OP) meetings occur more frequently than budget revisions, it creates a timing gap where updated demand projections are not immediately incorporated into financial forecasts. Compounded by conservative adjustments, this discrepancy often results in financial plans that lag operational realities, undermining alignment and responsiveness.

Moreover, legacy systems and fragmented tools further exacerbate the issue. These static systems fail to capture real-time changes and cause financial plans that lag operational realities. As a result, organizations often face delays in revising forecasts or adapting budgets to reflect current market conditions, hampering agility and decision-making.

Challenges confronting FP&A

The traditional FP&A landscape is fraught with challenges that limit its effectiveness in dynamic environments:

- **Data silos:** Fragmented systems prevent the seamless integration of data and hinder the creation of cohesive financial plans. Since sales, marketing, and operations use disparate platforms that often fail to synchronize, FP&A teams are left with incomplete or inconsistent data. This fragmentation disrupts the alignment between operational realities and financial strategies.
- **Labor-intensive processes:** Budget revisions and forecasting processes are time-consuming, often requiring extensive manual intervention. These inefficiencies delay decision-making and reduce the capacity of FP&A teams to focus on strategic initiatives. In addition, manual processes increase the risk of errors and undermine the accuracy of financial insights.
- **Forecasting gaps:** Conservative revenue projections and aggressive supply planning create mismatches that can erode profitability. For instance, underestimating revenue to remain conservative can lead to missed opportunities, while overestimating supply requirements incurs unnecessary operational costs. This disconnect often results in suboptimal resource allocation.
- **Dynamic market pressures:** Rapidly evolving customer expectations and market uncertainties challenge static methods FP&A teams traditionally employ. Organizations struggle to adapt financial plans to volatile environments, which leaves them exposed to risks such as supply chain disruptions, inflationary pressures, or sudden demand shifts.
- **Limited real-time insight:** Legacy tools are ill-equipped to provide real-time visibility into financial and operational metrics. This delay prevents organizations from responding promptly to emerging opportunities or threats, reducing their competitive edge.
- **Lagging Organizational AI Adoption:** As companies increasingly adopt AI across functions like sales, marketing, and operations, FP&A risks falling behind. The growing use of generative AI in other departments leads to exponential data generation and rapid decision cycles. Without comparable tools, FP&A struggles to manage the data influx and adapt to the accelerating pace of business change. The inability to integrate with AI-powered processes elsewhere in the organization creates further misalignment and underscores the necessity for FP&A to catch up.

Organizations need to address these pain points to maintain financial resilience and agility in today's fast-paced business environment. Solutions must not only resolve technical

limitations but also address cultural and structural barriers that inhibit FP&A teams from evolving into strategic enablers of organizational success.

How AI can revolutionize FP&A

Integrating AI into FP&A processes could revolutionize the function. This would address longstanding challenges and unlock unprecedented efficiencies and capabilities that enhance accuracy, efficiency, and decision making.

One transformative capability AI could offer is automating data aggregation and cleaning. By consolidating data from disparate sources, AI could eliminate manual errors and expedite data-preparation processes. This seamless integration could ensure FP&A teams can access accurate, up-to-date data to set the stage for improved analysis and forecasting.

AI could also help overcome biases in forecasting. Conservative revenue projections and aggressive cost budgeting often misalign financial plans with operational realities. This creates inefficiencies. By analyzing the latest market trends, external factors, and internal data, such as inventory levels, AI could produce more accurate and dynamic forecasts. These forecasts would enable FP&A teams to adjust revenue and cost expectations in near real-time, reducing the time and effort traditionally required for budget revisions.

Another significant advantage of AI could be its ability to integrate with generative AI solutions already in use across other organizational functions. By aligning with AI-powered tools in departments like sales, marketing, and operations, AI could enhance FP&A reporting capabilities and foster seamless collaboration across teams. This integration could break down silos, enabling a unified approach to data analysis and decision making to ensure that financial planning is more aligned with broader organizational strategies.

Generative AI tools could also revolutionize scenario analysis. Companies can now complete time-intensive processes in moments, enabling organizations to explore what-if scenarios with greater speed and precision. This capability could allow companies to anticipate risks and opportunities, aligning financial strategies with operational contingencies.

Moreover, AI's advanced reporting and analysis capabilities could transform how FP&A teams visualize and interpret performance data. Innovative charting features and dynamic dashboards could enable faster, more insightful performance analyses. These tools could simplify complex datasets into actionable insights, fostering clearer communication with stakeholders.

AI can bridge the gap between FP&A and S&OP processes. By dynamically aligning demand forecasts with financial plans, AI might eliminate timing discrepancies that often arise due to the different frequencies of S&OP meetings and budget revisions. This integration could provide real-time adjustments that ensure financial plans reflect the latest operational realities.

Ultimately, AI could position FP&A not just as a function that monitors financial health but as a strategic enabler capable of driving agility, collaboration, and data-driven decision making across the organization.

The current state of AI in financial management

AI in finance is gaining momentum, with organizations increasingly recognizing its potential to transform FP&A processes. According to Gartner research, 64% of finance teams that have adopted AI report that its impact has met or exceeded expectations. These organizations cite improved accuracy, faster insights, and increased efficiency as the primary benefits of AI integration.

AI-powered solutions automate routine tasks, such as report generation, variance analysis, and financial consolidations, which free FP&A professionals to focus on strategic planning and value-added activities. Tools equipped with anomaly-detection capabilities further enhance financial accuracy by flagging irregularities for review.

Technological foundations and tools in FP&A

Several technological advancements underpin AI's success in FP&A. Machine learning, for example, identifies patterns in large datasets, enhancing the accuracy of forecasts and detecting anomalies. Natural language processing (NLP) automates the generation of reports, while generative AI tools transform complex datasets into compelling narratives that drive engagement.

AI-powered platforms, such as Jedox and Domo, enable organizations to adopt these technologies. Jedox supports financial modeling and profitability analysis, while Domo integrates real-time analytics into customizable dashboards. These tools are revolutionizing the way FP&A teams interact with data by offering greater clarity and actionable insights.

Success stories in AI implementation

The transformative power of AI in FP&A is becoming increasingly evident, as companies across various industries leverage AI to drive significant improvements in operational efficiency, cost reduction, and profitability. One compelling example comes from JD.com, a leading Chinese e-commerce giant, which has embraced AI to revolutionize its business processes and achieve remarkable financial outcomes.

JD.com integrated AI across its operations to optimize supply chain management, automate procurement, and enhance inventory turnover. The company achieved an impressive 85% automation rate in procurement processes and reduced inventory turnover to 30 days. JD.com used AI-driven tools for demand forecasting and dynamic inventory management to align supply with demand more precisely and reduce costs while ensuring customer satisfaction.

These innovations are directly tied to FP&A functions. AI-enabled forecasting allows JD.com to dynamically adjust sales projections based on real-time data, including market trends, inventory levels, and customer behavior. This level of precision ensures that financial plans and budgets are not only accurate but also adaptive to align seamlessly with operational realities.

In addition, JD.com's use of AI-powered cost-saving measures, such as intelligent content creation and digital live-streaming services, have streamlined operations and reduced expenses for its merchant partners. These AI-driven initiatives contributed to a 92% increase in net income in the second quarter of 2024, underscoring the profound impact of AI on its financial performance.

For FP&A professionals, JD.com's success story demonstrates the immense potential of integrating AI into financial workflows. The ability to forecast with greater accuracy, optimize resource allocation, and align financial strategies with operational insights highlights how AI can elevate FP&A from a reactive function to a proactive, strategic enabler of organizational success.

FP&A teams can learn from cases and understand how to leverage AI to not only address traditional challenges like data silos and manual inefficiencies but also to position organizations to thrive in a fast-paced, data-driven environment. JD.com's example underscores AI is not optional. It is a necessity for staying competitive and achieving sustainable growth in today's business landscape.

Impact of AI on the FP&A workforce

As AI automates routine tasks, FP&A professionals are undergoing a profound transformation from traditional number crunchers to strategic business partners who shape organizational direction. This evolution demands an expanded skill set that includes advanced data analytics, expertise in leveraging AI-driven tools, and a heightened capacity for strategic decision-making. To facilitate this shift, many organizations are embedding data scientists within FP&A teams to ensure AI solutions are not only customized to address specific organizational challenges but also seamlessly integrated into existing workflows. This collaboration enables FP&A teams to maximize AI technologies to bridge the gap between technical capabilities and strategic application.

The role of humans in an AI-driven FP&A landscape

While AI revolutionizes FP&A by automating processes, generating insights, and improving forecasting accuracy, its true effectiveness is tied to human oversight. Even the most advanced AI solutions require the human element to contextualize, strategize, and navigate complexities that lie beyond the capabilities of algorithms.

While AI excels at processing structured data and identifying patterns, it lacks the ability to interpret out-of-system information or adapt to nuanced, rapidly changing business

environments. For example, unforeseen geopolitical shifts, regulatory changes, or unexpected market events often require human intuition and judgment. Professionals play a pivotal role in integrating these qualitative factors into FP&A processes, ensuring that AI-driven forecasts and plans align with real-world complexities.

The role of human professionals becomes more strategic as organizations implement AI. Success hinges on their ability to guide the design, deployment, and ongoing operation of AI solutions. Key responsibilities include the following:

- **Ensure AI accuracy and relevance:** Humans validate AI-generated outputs to ensure alignment with business realities. They address potential biases in data and fine-tune AI models to reflect the unique needs of the organization.
- **Interpret and contextualize insights:** While AI delivers advanced analytics, it is the human element that translates these insights into actionable strategies. Professionals bring the contextual knowledge necessary to connect AI findings to organizational goals and long-term plans.
- **Drive change management:** The implementation of AI often requires significant cultural and operational shifts. Leaders drive this transformation when they foster cross-functional collaboration, secure stakeholder buy-in, and ensure that AI adoption enhances rather than disrupts workflows.

Enhancing collaboration across functions

AI solutions thrive in interconnected environments, and FP&A professionals act as liaisons between various business functions. By integrating AI-generated insights with inputs from departments, such as sales, marketing, and operations, professionals ensure cohesive planning and decision-making. This collaborative approach not only improves the accuracy of forecasts but also strengthens interdepartmental relationships.

Ethical oversight and responsible use of AI

Ethical considerations are paramount in any AI deployment. Professionals are essential in identifying and addressing potential ethical issues, such as biases in AI algorithms or misuse of data. To safeguard the trust of stakeholders, human oversight ensures that AI operates within regulatory boundaries and adheres to organizational values.

A shift toward strategic roles

As routine tasks are automated, FP&A professionals are empowered to focus on high-value activities such as strategic planning, scenario analysis, and risk management. This shift from operational to strategic roles not only elevates the impact of FP&A teams but also enhances their contribution to organizational success.

The future of human-AI synergy in FP&A

The integration of human expertise with AI capabilities is the cornerstone of a successful FP&A transformation. Professionals provide judgment, creativity, and strategic foresight that AI cannot replicate. By leveraging the strengths of both human and machine, organizations can unlock the full potential of AI, ensuring that financial planning and analysis not only adapts to the complexities of modern business but thrives within them.

Ultimately, the partnership between humans and AI is not a replacement but an enhancement that enables FP&A to achieve unprecedented levels of accuracy, agility, and strategic impact.

Risks of implementing AI solutions

The integration of any AI solution doesn't come free of risks. The same goes for implementing AI into FP&A because of significant risks, particularly in areas such as data quality, systemic bias, and ethical governance. If not carefully managed, these risks can undermine the reliability of AI-driven insights and present broader challenges to organizational equity and resilience.

Data quality remains a critical concern. AI systems heavily rely on accurate, comprehensive, and current datasets. Incomplete, siloed, or inaccurate data can lead to flawed analyses and unreliable forecasts that erode trust in AI and reduce its value in decision making. Outdated or fragmented data sources further exacerbate this risk, as they fail to reflect evolving market realities and internal organizational changes.

Another significant risk is the potential for systemic bias in AI-generated decisions. AI systems, using historical data, may inadvertently perpetuate existing prejudices embedded in those datasets. For example, biases related to race, gender, or socioeconomic status could result in discriminatory financial decisions, such as inequitable lending or resource allocation. This not only raises ethical concerns but also poses broader systemic risks to financial stability and equity within industries. Such biases, if unchecked, can exacerbate inequalities, damage organizational reputations, and destabilize entire sectors.

In addition, AI's ability to predict unexpected patterns remains constrained by its dependence on historical data. While AI can identify and extrapolate trends from large datasets, it struggles to adapt to unprecedented events or highly unpredictable scenarios. For instance, during global disruptions, such as pandemics or sudden geopolitical crises, AI models may fail to provide accurate insights due to a lack of precedent or insufficient data. This limitation underscores the need for human intervention to interpret results, adjust models, and incorporate qualitative insights beyond AI's reach.

Ethical and regulatory risks also loom large. Without adequate governance, the use of AI could result in non-compliance with regulations related to data privacy, algorithmic transparency, and equitable decision making. These regulatory breaches expose

organizations to legal penalties and reputational harm. Furthermore, the opaque nature of some AI models, often referred to as black box systems, complicates efforts to ensure accountability and transparency in their operation.

Resistance to AI adoption presents another significant risk. Stakeholders, including employees and decision makers, may harbor concerns about job displacement, loss of control, or the accuracy of AI systems. This skepticism can delay or even derail implementation efforts. The reluctance to trust AI solutions often stems from a lack of understanding about its capabilities and limitations, further emphasizing the need for strategic engagement.

Addressing these risks requires a multipronged approach. Organizations must prioritize robust data governance practices to ensure the integrity of inputs, employ rigorous testing and auditing of AI systems to identify and mitigate biases, and adhere to regulatory frameworks to maintain ethical standards. Furthermore, fostering a culture of collaboration and trust through transparent communication and stakeholder involvement is critical to overcoming resistance and ensuring the successful adoption of AI technologies.

Organizations that acknowledge and manage these risks can create a secure and ethical environment for AI implementation, unlocking its transformative potential while safeguarding against unintended consequences.

Challenges of implementing AI in FP&A

Despite its promise, AI adoption is not without hurdles. Talent shortages remain a critical issue, as organizations often struggle to find professionals with the expertise to implement and effectively manage AI systems. Data quality issues further compound the challenge, as inaccurate, incomplete, or siloed data can undermine the reliability of AI-generated insights. In addition, resistance to change, whether due to fear of job displacement or a lack of understanding of AI's capabilities, can slow adoption efforts.

Overcoming these barriers requires a multifaceted approach. Robust training programs equip teams with skills to effectively leverage AI tools. Consistent data validation processes are essential to ensure that AI operates on accurate and comprehensive datasets. Furthermore, organizations must communicate clearly about AI's role, emphasizing its function as a complement to human expertise rather than a replacement. This transparency can foster trust and encourage greater acceptance of AI-driven innovations.

Strategies for successful AI implementation

Implementing AI requires more than adopting cutting-edge technology; it demands a holistic approach encompassing strategic planning, cultural transformation, and workforce enablement. Organizations should initiate the journey with carefully chosen pilot projects that illustrate AI's value, focusing on specific pain points or inefficiencies. These pilots not

only build confidence but also provide actionable insights for scaling AI across the enterprise.

Upskilling employees is paramount. Training programs should emphasize data literacy, AI tool utilization, and advanced analytics to empower FP&A teams. In addition, fostering cross-functional collaboration between FP&A teams and data scientists is essential to bridge the gap between technical capabilities and business needs. This ensures an organization tailors AI tools to its challenges.

A robust data-driven culture is equally critical. This entails establishing clear governance frameworks, integrating AI into decision-making processes, and promoting the effective use of AI-generated insights. By embedding AI within the organizational fabric, companies can ensure that the insights generated lead to meaningful and actionable outcomes, transforming FP&A into a strategic powerhouse.

AI is fundamentally reshaping FP&A from a reactive, manual function into a dynamic, data-driven enabler of strategic success. By automating routine tasks, delivering real-time insights, and fostering seamless integration across organizational functions, AI equips finance teams to navigate today's complexities with precision and agility. AI's true potential lies not just in its capabilities but in how organizations harness it through continuous learning, ethical oversight, cross-functional collaboration, and a commitment to cultural transformation. For those prepared to embrace this shift, AI offers a path to greater efficiency, smarter decision making, and a competitive edge in an ever-evolving business landscape. The future of FP&A is not just automated—it's empowered.