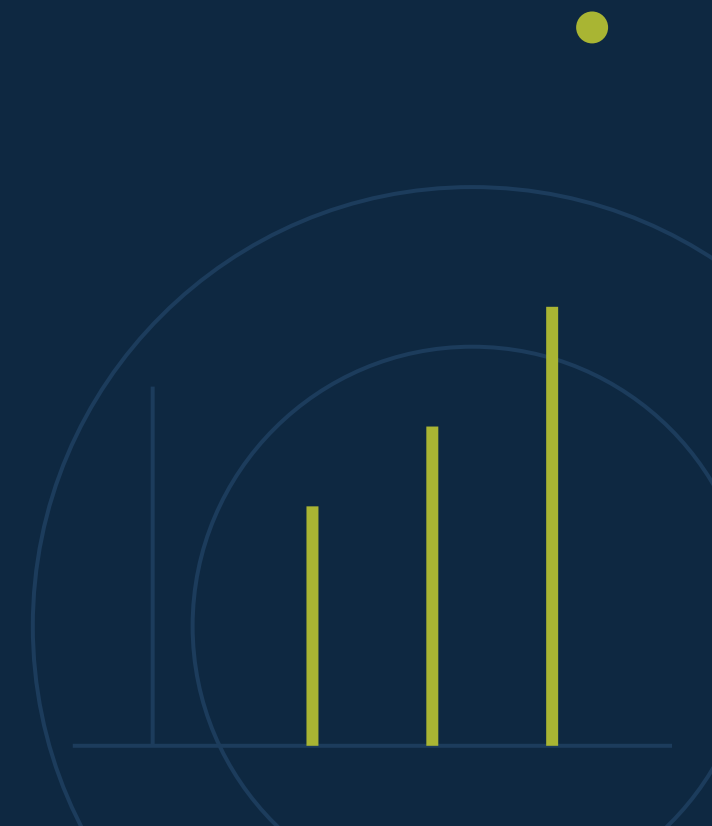


CITRIN COOPERMAN

Data-Driven Decision Making: Building a Finance Analytics Culture Including AI

Leveraging analytics and AI for smarter finance decisions



AGENDA

01 Defining Data-Driven Finance

02 Importance of Data Culture

03 Foundation for Analytics & AI

04 Finance Analytics Demo

YOUR SPEAKERS



Dena Wilson
Director, Advisory Data & AI

Dena Wilson is a Director on Citrin Cooperman's Data and AI team, where she helps organizations harness the power of advanced analytics and modern AI technologies to drive measurable business outcomes. She specializes in developing scalable data strategies, optimizing business intelligence frameworks, and guiding clients to unlock meaningful value from their data.



Samson Truong
Manager, Advisory Data & AI

Samson Truong is a Microsoft Fabric MVP and Data Analytics Professional at Citrin Cooperman, specializing in the Microsoft data platform. He helps clients modernize their analytics architecture, improve performance, and streamline end-to-end data workflows using Microsoft Fabric.

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Defining Data-Driven Finance

DEFINING DATA-DRIVEN FINANCE

Why Data-Driven Decision-Making Matters



Evolved Finance Expectations

Finance now anticipates future outcomes and provides real-time insights beyond historical data and compliance.

70% faster planning, ~50% higher productivity¹



Challenges with Traditional Methods

Manual and spreadsheet approaches fail to handle greater data volumes and faster market dynamics effectively.



AI Amplifies Finance Judgment

AI enables faster data processing but enhances, not replaces, human insight, skepticism, and strategy.

20–50% fewer forecast errors²



Cultural Transformation in Finance

Data-driven decision making is a behavioral shift led by finance to move from hindsight to foresight.

2.5X growth, 2x profitability³

¹ The CFO / Gartner, Oct. 2025 · ² McKinsey & Company, Feb. 2022 · ³ McKinsey Global Survey, Feb. 2018

Why This Matters for Florida Local Government



A Highly Fragmented Landscape

Florida's 67 counties, 400+ municipalities, and more than 2,000 special districts (Chapter 189, F.S.) each run their own budget, financial system, and reporting calendar.



Recurring, Deadline-Driven Reporting

TRIM notices, Annual Financial Reports to the Florida DFS, and audited ACFRs create a steady cycle of data requests that manual, spreadsheet-based processes struggle to keep pace with.



High Public Visibility

Budget hearings, commission meetings, and public records requests mean finance data has to be accurate, current, and easy to explain to residents and elected officials.



A Shared Starting Point

Most Florida local governments run similar legacy systems and face similar staffing constraints, so practices that work in one county or city typically transfer to the next.

What It Means to Be Data-Driven



Trusted Data for Decisions

Data-driven finance uses trusted and consistent data to guide enterprise-wide decision-making effectively.



Insight-Embedded Workflows

Insights are embedded into daily workflows, enabling proactive and informed decision-making beyond just reporting.



Focus on Business Drivers

Finance focuses on revenue growth, margin, costs, capacity, and cash flow rather than only past results.



Informed Professional Judgment

Professional judgment is informed by reliable evidence and shared assumptions, not just intuition or anecdote.

From Descriptive to Prescriptive Insights

Descriptive

Explains what happened using historical financial reports and dashboards.



Diagnostic

Analyzes causes of performance variance to explain why outcomes differed.



Predictive

Uses trends and models to forecast future financial outcomes.



Prescriptive

Recommends actions and scenarios to improve financial results.



POLL QUESTION

Where would you place your organization on the descriptive-to-prescriptive spectrum?

A

Descriptive: reporting what happened

B

Diagnostic: understanding why it happened

C

Predictive: forecasting what's next

D

Prescriptive: recommending next actions

Real-World Use Case: Budget Optimization

CHALLENGE

- Manual, spreadsheet-based monitoring makes it hard to catch overspending or underspending across dozens of funds and departments until it's too late
- Comparing actuals to budget by department, fund, and grant source is time-consuming and error-prone
- Officials and residents expect clear, timely answers about where variances are coming from



SOLUTION

- AI-assisted forecasting continuously compares actuals to budget and flags departments or funds trending off-plan
- Plain-language queries let staff ask why a line item is over or under budget without building a report from scratch
- The system recommends reallocation or reforecast options; finance staff review and approve every change



RESULT

- Faster, more frequent reforecasting instead of waiting for quarter-end or year-end
- Fewer emergency budget amendments and last-minute surprises at commission meetings
- Clearer, source-backed explanations when presenting variances to elected officials and the public

Illustrative pattern based on how AI is being applied in public-sector finance today — human review and approval remain part of every step.

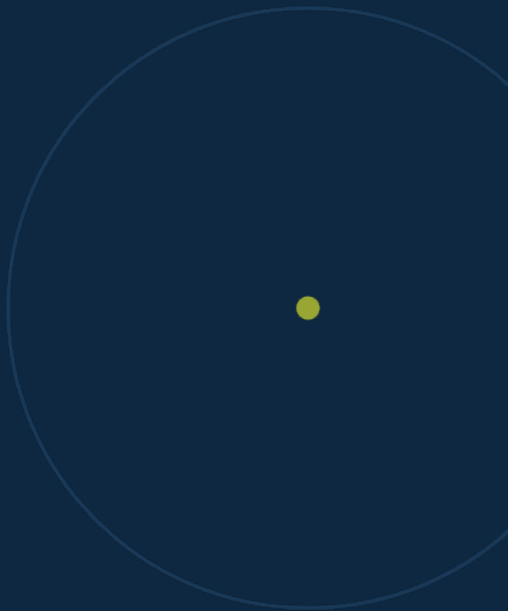


POLL QUESTION

Are your current workflows driven by data or intuition?

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Importance of Data Culture



Why Data Culture Comes Before Tools



Culture Drives Success

A strong analytics culture is essential for finance AI and analytics initiatives to succeed, beyond just advanced tools.



Common Cultural Barriers

Barriers include mistrust in data, multiple truth versions, spreadsheet overuse, and fear of transparency exposing errors.



Leadership's Critical Role

Effective leadership models data-first behavior, encourages learning, and promotes data as decision aids, not compliance tools.

Signals of a Data-Driven Finance Culture

✓ **"Which number is right?" becomes a rare question**

Finance and business teams share a single, trusted source of truth. Disagreements shift from debating the data to debating the decision.

✓ **Shadow spreadsheets give way to shared dashboards**

Offline models and personal Excel trackers are replaced by governed, self-service analytics the whole organization can access and trust.

✓ **Teams can articulate confidence in their numbers**

Staff can explain where a number comes from, how current it is, and what it excludes — a reliable sign data literacy has taken hold.

✓ **Finance dashboards cross departmental lines**

When operations, sales, and HR pull from finance-built reports to drive their own decisions, finance has become a true strategic partner.



POLL QUESTION

Which signal of a data-driven finance culture is strongest at your organization?

A

One trusted source of truth for numbers

B

Shared dashboards over shadow spreadsheets

C

Staff can explain where numbers come from

D

Not there yet, still mostly manual

Real-World Use Case: Spend Anomaly Detection – Telecom Company

CHALLENGE

- Manual review of financial transactions is time-consuming and prone to missed anomalies
- Difficult to detect suspicious vendor activity, duplicate invoices, and abnormal spending patterns at scale
- Lack of continuous monitoring leaves gaps in fraud detection and compliance validation



SOLUTION

- Tools continuously extract, clean, and structure transaction data from ERP systems for analysis
- Rule-based and pattern detection logic identifies anomalies in vendor behavior, payment history, and risk scoring
- Automated compliance validation and issue resolution provide actionable next steps for flagged transactions



RESULT

- Continuous automated monitoring replaces manual transaction review at scale
- High-risk and non-compliant transactions are flagged and resolved faster
- Stronger, more consistent fraud prevention through repeatable AI-driven detection logic



POLL QUESTION

What challenges are you currently facing in establishing a data culture?

A

Siloed or duplicated data across departments

B

Limited staff time or analytics expertise

C

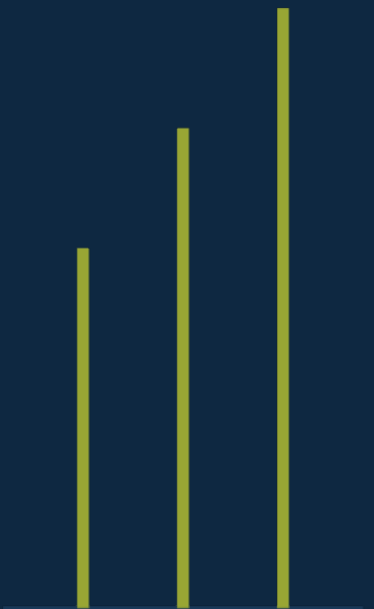
Legacy systems that don't integrate well

D

Other

PART 03 OF 04

Foundation for Analytics & AI



Data Quality, Governance, and Enablement



Importance of Data Quality

Trusted data enables faster decisions and reduces reconciliation efforts in finance analytics.



Role of Governance

Good governance establishes clear ownership, shared metrics, and accountability — consolidating siloed finance, tax, permitting, and grant systems into one trusted source.



Self-Service Analytics Enablement

Empowers business users on common KPIs like days to close and forecast accuracy, while finance retains control over key financial logic.



AI Augmentation in Finance

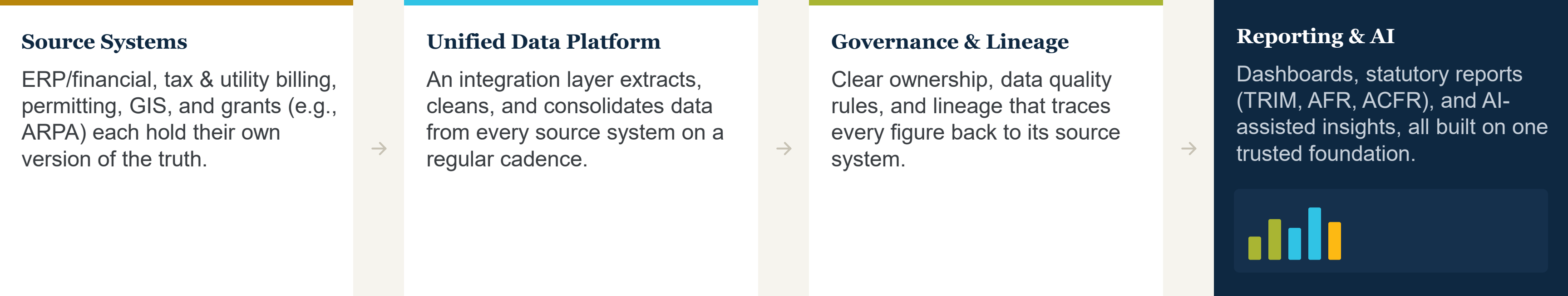
Strong data quality and governance create the foundation for AI to enhance finance effectively.



Data Lineage

Tracing a number back to its source system supports audit readiness and gives residents and officials confidence in what they're being shown.

Connecting Siloed Government Data



Practical Role of AI



AI Enhances Finance Analytics

AI automates repetitive tasks and accelerates insight generation.

Manual



AI-assisted



≤30% less time on data processing¹



High-Value Use Cases

Predictive cash flow forecasting · Automated variance explanations ·
Journal entry reduction · Early risk indicators



AI as Finance Co-Pilot

AI provides insights quickly but requires human interpretation and risk assessment.



Importance of Data Quality

Poor data quality costs organizations an average of \$12.9M per year, and that cost scales with AI investment.²

¹ McKinsey, Nov 2025 · ² Gartner, "Data Quality: Why It Matters and How to Achieve It"

Real-World Examples: AI in Finance Today

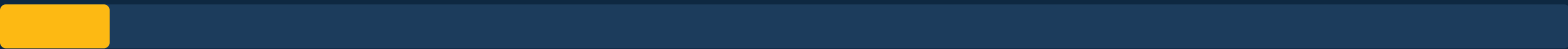
Adoption is outpacing impact

Gartner finds nearly 60% of finance teams are piloting or implementing AI, yet only 7% of CFOs report a strong impact. The gap is usually data foundation, not tooling.

60% piloting AI



7% see strong impact



A single source of truth predicts late payments

Fintech Pinaka AI unifies CRM, ERP, and credit-agency data to predict which B2B customers will pay late, and why, with 96% accuracy.

Foundation first, then AI

Adyen centralized its financial data into one core before layering on AI, powering automated reconciliation and a faster close built on trust.

Manual reviews become continuous monitoring

KPMG Africa automated a telecom's weekly manual data checks into continuous export, analysis, and exception-raising — cutting errors and audit fatigue.



POLL QUESTION

How would you describe your organization's AI adoption in finance today?

A

Not started yet

B

Piloting in select areas

C

Implementing across multiple teams

D

Fully integrated into daily workflows

Real-World Example: Month-End Close Automation – UK Manufacturer

CHALLENGE

- Month-end variance commentary consumed 18 hours per close across the finance team
- Spreadsheet-based commentary couldn't keep pace with reporting deadlines
- No structured way to reuse prior commentary style or context cycle to cycle



SOLUTION

- A 30-day audit pinpointed variance commentary as the highest-pain workflow to automate first
- A 30-day parallel run trained an AI assistant on prior commentary and the chart of accounts
- Cutover to AI-drafted commentary as the primary output, with the finance director reviewing rather than writing



RESULT

- 73% reduction in close-related commentary time
- Equivalent of 1.5 FTE per month freed for FP&A and business partnering
- Approach since extended to cash flow forecasting and customer concentration analysis

Real-World Example: Unifying Fragmented Financial Data – The Crew Network

CHALLENGE

- Finance data was scattered across roughly 50 entities, each with its own chart of accounts
- The org generated over 10,000 general ledger transaction lines per month
- A 35-person finance team needed constant custom coding just to keep the old structure running



SOLUTION

- Used a generic enterprise ChatGPT account to map every entity's old chart of accounts to one unified structure
- AI reconciled inconsistent transaction labeling across entities and time periods
- Kept existing internal-control formulas in place to independently verify the AI's output



RESULT

- A remap that would have taken a consultant team two to three weeks was done in four to five days
- A unified chart of accounts became the foundation for further finance automation
- Key lesson: the CFO's solo speed came at a cost — the wider team didn't get to learn the process alongside her



POLL QUESTION

What is the biggest barrier to you using AI in your business?

A

Data Quality

B

Capabilities and understanding of tools

C

Lack of access to AI tools

D

IT and Security Teams

PART 04 OF 04 · LIVE DEMO

Finance Analytics Demo



Thank You

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