



Real-Time Finance

From digitised finance processes to a decision-ready finance infrastructure

A CFO guide to current financial data, integrated banking processes and the next stage of the finance function

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Executive Summary

Why finance infrastructure becomes a strategic CFO question in 2026

Finance transformation is discussed today primarily in terms of AI, automation and better decisions. Yet before companies can realise that potential, a far more fundamental precondition is required: current, complete and usable financial data.

Many companies have digitised their finance processes over recent years. ERP systems have been implemented, bank portals modernised and reporting processes automated. And still, a decisive gap often opens up between these systems.

Bank data is imported with a delay. Cash positions are consolidated manually. Payment files leave the ERP and are processed in separate bank portals. Changes to beneficiary data are transferred from emails or documents.

The company is digitised, but its financial reality is not yet current.

It is precisely this difference that becomes strategically relevant in 2026.

Since October 2025, real time has increasingly become the regulatory norm in European payments. Payment service providers in the euro area must be able not only to receive SEPA instant credit transfers but also to send them. At the same time, with Verification of Payee, the match between beneficiary name and IBAN has become part of the European payment process.

While banking infrastructure has changed, many corporate processes still operate with the structures of the previous generation.

In parallel, expectations of AI-supported financial steering are rising. Models can recognise patterns. They cannot replace data that does not exist in the system.

Anyone discussing AI in finance therefore also has to discuss the quality, structure and timeliness of the underlying financial data.

This white paper shows

- where structural friction arises between banking and finance,
- when operational inefficiency turns into a business risk,
- how CFOs can determine the maturity of their finance infrastructure,
- what infrastructure real-time finance actually requires,
- and which decisions are necessary to reach the next stage of development.

The central thesis:

The next generation of finance will not emerge from more AI alone. It emerges where companies first build the data and process infrastructure on which automation, AI and better decisions can reliably rest.

1. The Hidden Finance Gap

Why “digital” is still a long way from real time

Most mid-market finance organisations are not starting from zero today. They have ERP systems, digital banking, automated workflows and reporting solutions. And yet core finance processes remain fragmented.

The problem is therefore often not a lack of software. It is the gap between the systems that exist and the ability to generate current, decision-ready financial information from them.

1.1 Delayed transparency

The cash view across several banks is frequently compiled separately on a daily or weekly basis. Finance therefore answers a seemingly simple question with considerable effort:

How much liquidity is available to us right now?

The longer the update takes, the larger the difference between the figure in reporting and the actual financial situation.

1.2 Manual reconciliation

Among the most labour-intensive processes are matching incoming payments to open items, handling partial and bulk payments, discounts or deductions, and reworking failed payments.

As a result, qualified finance staff spend their time on reconciliation and clarification rather than on analysis and steering.

1.3 Fragmented banking and ERP processes

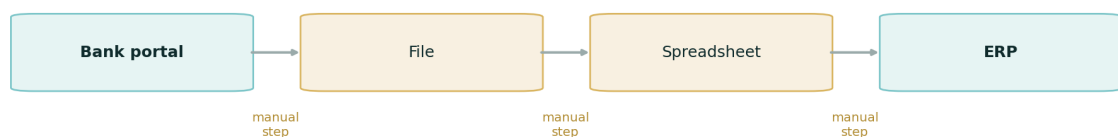
A typical process still runs across several systems, in both directions. Payment status does not necessarily flow back into the leading system automatically.

Media breaks also arise in vendor master data. New bank details are transmitted by email or document, for example, and then entered manually.

Every system change creates another point at which data ages or manual work becomes necessary.

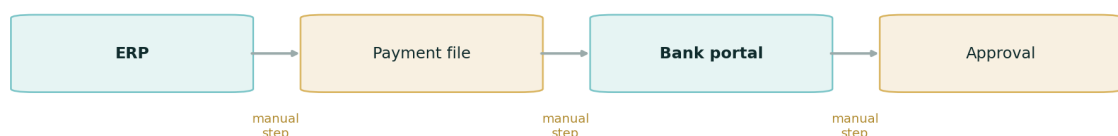
Account information into the company

The account balance only reaches the leading system after several handovers



Payments out of the company

Payment status does not necessarily flow back automatically



Every system change creates another point at which data ages or manual work becomes necessary.

Figure 1: The hidden finance gap – how account information and payments typically flow today.

Two examples from practice

The hidden finance gap becomes particularly visible when the discussion moves from abstract technology to real corporate processes. The following examples are intended to illustrate this.

Example 1: Multi-site specialist retail

A specialist retailer with several dozen locations works with a number of different banks. Payments are prepared in Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central and then forwarded to the banks through separate banking systems. At the same time, current account information is not consistently available in the ERP.

This becomes directly relevant in day-to-day operations.

If a customer pays by instant credit transfer after a regular cut-off and wants to take the goods immediately, the store needs one piece of information:

Has the money actually arrived?

Staff contact accounting to find out. But if accounting works with delayed account statements such as MT940 or camt.053, finance cannot necessarily answer the question in real time either.

A banking topic thus becomes an immediate customer-experience and operational process topic.

The strategic question is not only how payments can be processed faster. It is:

How does the current financial reality reach the place where the operational decision is being made?

Example 2: Mid-market manufacturer

A mid-market manufacturer currently works with a financial accounting system in which payment files are created and then imported into a separate banking system. Transmission to the bank runs via EBICS.

In the opposite direction, account statements have to be exported from the banking system and transferred back into financial accounting manually.

In the course of an ERP modernisation, Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central is introduced. This creates a strategic decision:

Is the existing system logic simply reproduced with more modern applications? Or are banking and ERP connected so that payments and account information converge more strongly within the new finance infrastructure?

This is exactly the point at which it is decided whether digitisation merely modernises existing system breaks or actually reduces them.

The decisive CFO question is therefore not whether finance processes are digitised. It is:

How current is the financial reality on which we base our decisions today?

2. From operational problem to business risk

Manual finance processes are often viewed primarily as an efficiency problem. How many hours does bank reconciliation cost? How much time is needed for cash reporting? How many process steps could be automated?

For CFOs, this perspective is not sufficient. The strategically more important question is:

Which decisions become slower, weaker or riskier when finance cannot access current and reliable information?

Four dimensions are particularly relevant here.

Cash & Liquidity

If the consolidated cash position is only known the following day, liquidity management already starts from an outdated baseline.

In practice this can lead to higher safety buffers on accounts, unused early-payment discount windows or avoidable overdraft usage. A forecast is only as current as its baseline.

Operational Efficiency

Bank reconciliation, cash reporting and payment approvals tie up capacity among exactly those specialists who should be analysing, steering and preparing decisions. This becomes especially visible at month-end close.

There is also a frequently underestimated key-person risk. If only one person knows the full reconciliation process, an inefficient process simultaneously becomes an organisational risk.

Risk & Control

The increasing speed of payments also changes control requirements. With instant credit transfers, the window for subsequent intervention shortens considerably. Control therefore has to move further ahead of payment execution.

Particular attention is needed for changes to bank details in vendor master data, payment approvals outside the leading system, and incomplete document trails between ERP and bank.

Verification of Payee plays an important role in this context. The regulatory obligation applies to payment service providers, not to the company itself. What remains relevant for companies are internal control processes, traceability and the handling of mismatch notifications.

Decision Quality

The timeliness of financial data affects more than finance. It affects operational and strategic decisions across the entire company.

Examples range from investment and procurement decisions to payment approvals and negotiations on payment terms, right through to the question of whether goods can be released because an incoming payment has been confirmed.

In many of these situations the problem is not the quality of the analysis. It is the data on which the analysis is based.

3. The CFO maturity model

How real-time ready is your finance function?

Real-time finance is not a binary state. Companies move along different stages of development.

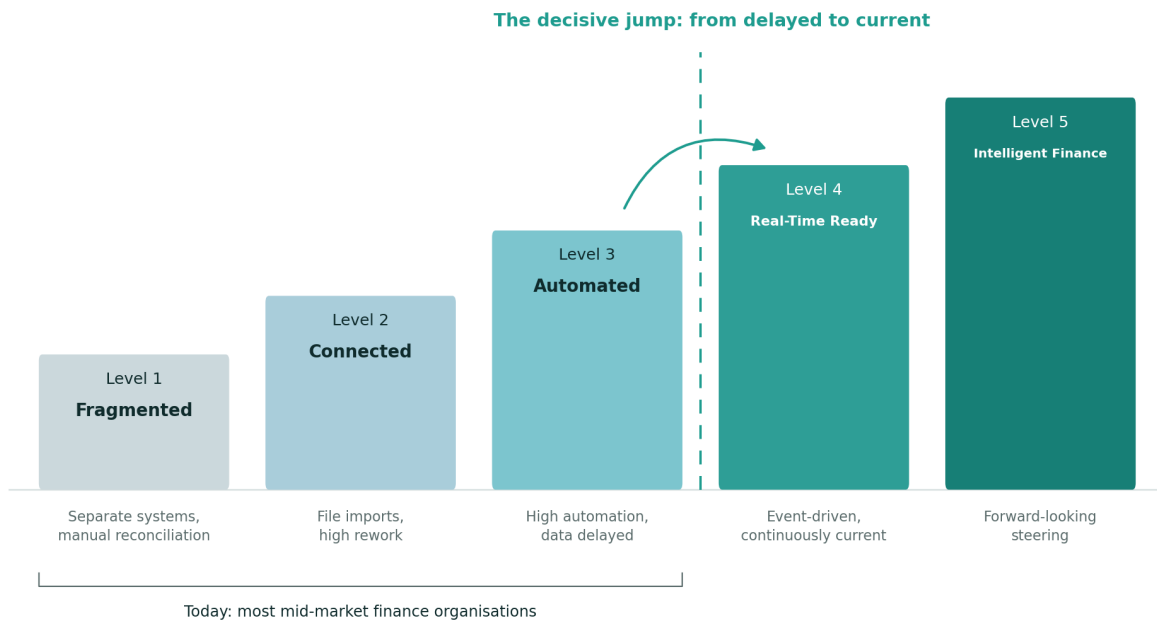


Figure 2: The CFO maturity model – the five development stages of finance infrastructure.

Level 1 – Fragmented

Banking, ERP and finance processes operate largely separately. Account statements are retrieved manually, reconciliation is mostly done in spreadsheets, and payments are executed outside the ERP in the bank portal. Beneficiary data is not verified by the system.

Typical characteristic: finance works digitally, but in separate systems.

Level 2 – Connected

First systems are linked. Bank data is imported through files once or several times a day. Rule-based processes support reconciliation but still require a high share of manual rework. Payment files originate in the ERP but are approved outside the system.

Typical characteristic: data flows between systems, but not yet continuously.

Level 3 – Automated

Recurring processes are largely automated. Bank data is available several times a day. Incoming payments are mostly matched automatically and only exceptions have to be clarified. Payments can be initiated from the ERP and status information partly flows back.

Typical characteristic: the level of automation is high, but data latency remains.

Level 4 – Real-Time Ready

Data is processed event-driven and with low latency. Reconciliation runs continuously, exceptions are actively flagged, and payment processes including instant payments and status feedback are more strongly integrated into the ERP. Beneficiary data can be verified before payment execution.

Typical characteristic: finance works not only in an automated way, but on a continuously current data set.

Level 5 – Intelligent Finance

Current financial data is available in structured form across bank connections. Processes react increasingly in an event-driven and forward-looking manner. Forecasting and anomaly detection can build on a current data basis.

Typical characteristic: finance no longer only reacts faster to events, but can increasingly steer processes ahead of them.

Level 5 is less a description of today's average than a target picture.

In practice, most mid-market finance organisations today sit between level 2 and level 3. The decisive step is therefore rarely the move to more automation. It is the move from a high degree of automation with delayed data to a continuously current data set.

CFO self-assessment

Ask yourself five questions:

1. How many bank connections have to be handled outside our ERP?
2. How much of our bank reconciliation is done manually?
3. How current is our consolidated cash position?
4. How many finance processes require file exports or manual data transfers?
5. How quickly can finance react to a change?

The decisive dividing line does not run only between manual and automated. Increasingly, it runs between delayed and current.

4. The infrastructure behind real-time finance

Real-time finance does not emerge from another dashboard. What matters is the infrastructure behind it.

Banking, ERP, payment processes and financial data have to be connected in such a way that information does not have to be permanently transported, exported and reprocessed between systems.

ERP integration

Bank data and payment processes should, wherever possible, be processed in the leading finance system. The aim is not another parallel data set, but an end-to-end process chain.

Banking connectivity

Several technical routes exist for the connection between companies and banks, including file-based exchange, EBICS, SWIFT connections and APIs. The central difference lies in how current information can be made available and how well processes can be linked.

APIs

APIs enable direct exchange between systems. Relevant for companies are both the interfaces provided under European payment services regulation and the more extensive corporate APIs offered by individual banks.

Automated reconciliation

Incoming and outgoing payments can be matched to open items on the basis of reference, amount, remittance information and further criteria.

The relevant difference from fully manual reconciliation: finance handles the exception, not every single transaction.

Current transaction data

Current balances and transactions form the basis for cash visibility, forecasting and downstream processes. An important distinction is needed here:

Intraday is not automatically real time. A retrieval every two hours remains a periodic retrieval, only at a shorter interval.

The more accounts, transactions and banks have to be processed, the more the operational effort of a fragmented architecture scales.

Integrated payment processes

Capture, approval, execution and status feedback can take place within one integrated process chain. This reduces the need to switch between ERP and bank portals.

5. Verification of Payee

Verification of Payee, often also referred to as an IBAN name check, compares the beneficiary name provided by the payer with the account holder of the specified IBAN. The result is displayed before payment approval.

Possible results range from a match through a close match to no match, or a check that could not be performed.

For CFOs this development is relevant for two reasons.

First, payment risks arise before the actual banking process, for example when bank details in invoices or change notifications are manipulated. The subsequent payment run can then be technically entirely regular and authorised.

Second, with instant credit transfers the possibility of subsequent intervention is considerably reduced. Checking before execution therefore gains importance.

Regulatory context

Verification of Payee forms part of Regulation (EU) 2024/886. Since 9 October 2025, payment service providers in the euro area have had to offer corresponding checks within the regulatory framework. Later implementation deadlines in 2027 apply to payment service providers in EU member states outside the euro area.

The distinction matters: companies themselves are not subject to a VoP obligation. The regulatory obligation applies to payment service providers. For companies, the question is rather how beneficiary verification can be integrated sensibly into existing finance and control processes.

In parallel, the European legal framework for payment services is being developed further. The successor rules to PSD2 shift the emphasis more towards harmonised data access and fraud prevention. For

companies, this changes the immediate compliance burden less than the expectation of which finance processes will count as state of the art in future.

Context for Switzerland

In Switzerland too, payments are moving towards more standardised, data-driven and automated processes. The introduction of instant payments, the further development of the Swiss Payment Standards on the basis of ISO 20022 and open finance initiatives are creating the technical conditions for more integrated control and verification processes.

A statutory obligation for beneficiary verification comparable to the EU is currently not scheduled. For Swiss companies, however, the ability to check payment and beneficiary data reliably before execution is becoming increasingly relevant, particularly in cross-border payment processes.

For companies with payment traffic in both Switzerland and the EU, this creates an additional challenge. While regulatory requirements differ, infrastructure and process standards are developing in a similar direction. Control processes therefore have to work consistently across country, bank and system boundaries.

BANQR therefore speaks of account and beneficiary verification before payment execution. This is not about promising to prevent fraud. Rather, integrated verification can help to identify discrepancies before payment execution and thereby reduce the risk of misdirected or fraudulent payments.

6. From infrastructure to business case

For CFOs, technology is not an end in itself. The decisive question is therefore not which features a finance solution offers. It is:

What operational and strategic change becomes possible through an integrated finance infrastructure?

This is exactly where BANQR becomes relevant. BANQR connects banking processes with Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central and thereby addresses the process breaks described above.

Cash 365 connects account data, payment execution and reconciliation within Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central. Fraud Prevention 365 adds account and beneficiary verification before payment execution and can additionally be used through a standalone portal without an ERP.

Cash visibility

Before Cash positions from different banks are consolidated manually and partly based on delayed data.

After Bank information is available inside the ERP and enables a more current consolidated view.

Bank reconciliation

Before An employee logs into online banking, checks balances and transactions, downloads data and then uploads it into another system. With two or three banks this already becomes a recurring manual process.

With ten banks, it is not only the number of accounts that scales, but also the number of logins, downloads, uploads, checks and potential process interruptions. In particularly complex customer environments, several dozen accounts have to be managed across a large number of bank relationships.

After Transactions can be processed and matched in a more automated way. Finance increasingly focuses on exceptions rather than on every individual data transfer.

In customer projects, the experience value is around 70% less time spent on the affected bank reconciliation processes. A team currently spending around 15 hours a week on reconciliation moves towards four to five hours.

This figure is expressly to be understood as an experience value from customer projects, not as a guarantee for every company. The concrete effect depends, among other things, on the number of banks, accounts and transactions, on the automation already in place and on the current process design.

Payment execution

Before Payment files are exported and processed separately in the bank portal.

After Approval and execution can take place more fully from within the ERP, including SEPA instant credit transfers.

Beneficiary verification

Before Bank details are entered manually or without an additional system-side check.

After Account and beneficiary data can be verified before payment execution. This can reduce the risk of misdirected and fraudulent payments.

Audit trail

Before Evidence has to be gathered from different systems for closing and audit purposes.

After Process steps can be logged and traced more completely in the leading system.

The business case therefore does not come from a single feature. It comes from reducing the breaks between finance, ERP and banking.

7. Why not simply add another finance or banking system?

Not every technical solution reduces the same process breaks.

Treasury platforms

Treasury platforms can be powerful, but they create a system of their own alongside the ERP, with corresponding implementation, separate data storage and additional interfaces.

For highly complex treasury structures this architecture can make sense. For mid-market companies, however, the question is whether an additional leading system is genuinely required for the processes involved.

File-based ERP extensions

File-based ERP extensions integrate processes more closely into the ERP. The technical architecture, however, still rests on the exchange of files. Data timeliness therefore remains structurally limited.

Account data connections only

Pure account data connections improve visibility of accounts and transactions. They do not necessarily cover payment execution and beneficiary verification. The process break at the payment itself can therefore remain.

Bank-owned portals

Bank-owned portals provide current and secure banking functions. They sit outside the ERP, however, and have to be operated separately where there are several bank relationships.

The BANQR approach

The BANQR approach is therefore to connect layers that have so far been separate:

Data + payment execution + account and beneficiary verification in the leading finance system.

The aim is not to build another system alongside the ERP. The aim is to make banking more available where finance already works: in Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central.

8. Finance transformation in practice

Technological possibilities alone do not create a business case. What matters is what changes in the real finance process.

This is precisely why intermediate wins matter in a finance transformation. Not every company starts with a fully consolidated banking landscape.

The first meaningful success can already lie in eliminating one manual data route, running one payment run directly from the ERP, or making current account information visible for the first time where finance actually works.

The target picture

With our customers we work on reducing the number of systems through which banking processes run today. The first measurable progress is rarely the application that gets switched off. It is the manual handover that disappears.

The aim is therefore not simply “less software”. It is a different kind of finance infrastructure: fewer system changes, fewer manual handovers and a more central, more current view of banking and liquidity.

In complex customer landscapes this can mean, for example, replacing the individual gathering of information from a landscape spread across several banks and dozens of accounts with a single immediate view in the leading finance system.

The relevant metric is therefore not only the number of systems switched off. What matters is how many process breaks disappear between a financial change and its visibility in the ERP.

9. The BANQR ecosystem

Real-time finance does not emerge in isolation. BANQR works within an existing finance, banking and technology ecosystem.

Deutsche Bank

BANQR is an official Corporate API partner of Deutsche Bank. For Deutsche Bank, the connection runs directly through the bank's corporate API and not through an intermediary third-party provider.

finAPI

For broad bank coverage across the SEPA area, BANQR works with finAPI. finAPI is a licensed provider of account information and payment initiation services and delivers the regulated bank connectivity. Using such an aggregator means companies do not have to build a fully separate technical integration for every bank connection.

bLink / SIX

Through bLink, BANQR can connect Swiss financial institutions via the Swiss open banking infrastructure.

Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central

Cash 365 is integrated into Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central. Cash 365 and Fraud Prevention 365 are available through the Microsoft Marketplace. The finance process therefore stays in the leading ERP system instead of requiring another treasury or banking system alongside it.

10. Where BANQR contributes – and where it does not

Finance transformation requires statements that hold up. It is therefore equally important to define what a solution can contribute and where its limits lie.

- BANQR does not promise guaranteed savings.
- BANQR does not promise to prevent fraud entirely.
- BANQR does not claim to cover every bank.
- BANQR does not automatically replace every existing treasury system.

The strategic approach is a different one: where companies work with Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central and banking processes are currently spread across several systems, files and portals, a more integrated infrastructure can reduce a substantial part of that complexity.

The aim is not maximum technology. The aim is a finance infrastructure that matches the actual complexity of the company.

11. CFO action framework

A CFO does not have to replace the entire finance infrastructure tomorrow. But three questions should be answered today.

1. Where do we stand today?

Determine the maturity of your finance function. The CFO self-assessment in chapter 3 is the starting point. Beyond that, review in particular:

- the number and type of bank connections
- the route by which data is transferred
- the timeliness of the consolidated cash position

- the share of automated reconciliation
- the number of system changes
- the handling of changes to beneficiary data
- the dependency on individual key people

2. Where does the greatest business impact arise?

Not every process has to be automated at once. Prioritise where the greatest effect arises:

Cash impact × time spent × risk × strategic relevance

The first sensible automation is not necessarily the technically easiest one. It is the one that creates the greatest finance leverage.

3. What infrastructure do we need for the next stage?

The question is not how a company reaches level 5 immediately. The better question is: what is missing for us to move exactly one stage further?

For a fragmented company that may first be consistent bank connectivity. For a company that is already automated, the decisive change may lie in data latency. For a real-time-ready organisation, the next step may be to make current data usable for forward-looking steering.

One note for the discussion in your team: the difference between “digitised” and “current” becomes visible fastest when you answer question 3 of the self-assessment concretely – is our cash position from today, from yesterday or from last week?

Is BANQR the right next step?

BANQR is particularly relevant for companies that:

- use Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central,
- manage at least two bank connections,
- operate mainly in SEPA or Swiss payments,
- have a noticeable manual share in bank reconciliation and payment processes,
- and have a finance team able to take process ownership.

Not every organisation needs the same infrastructure. Companies with very low transaction volumes, with payment traffic mainly outside the SEPA area, or with a fully implemented treasury system that already has working real-time connectivity have different requirements.

For the integrated BANQR solution, Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central is a central fit criterion. Beneficiary verification is an exception and can also be used through a standalone portal without an ERP.

Your next step

Determine the maturity level of your company.

In a 30-minute conversation we assess together where your finance function stands today, where the largest process break lies and which next step offers the greatest leverage. A position assessment for your finance infrastructure.

Book a meeting: calendly.com/nadine-ebmeyer-getbanqr/30min

Closing thought

The next generation of the finance function will not emerge from companies deploying more AI as quickly as possible. AI is an additional layer on top of infrastructure that already exists.

If data is fragmented, delayed or incomplete, technology simply automates those constraints faster.

The strategic starting point therefore lies deeper: in the connection between banking, ERP, data and processes. Only when a company's financial reality is current, structured and available in the right system does the basis for the next development step exist.

The transformation can begin very concretely:

- From ten logins to one integrated view.
- From downloads and uploads to connected data flows.
- From dozens of accounts across several bank relationships to one central view of financial reality.
- From finance that gathers information to finance that decides on the basis of it.

The next generation of finance therefore does not begin with another tool. It begins with the question of whether the existing infrastructure genuinely enables finance to see currently, act securely and decide faster.

The future of finance begins with the infrastructure that makes finance decision-ready.

About the author

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