

THE MODERN FINANCE FUNCTION BLUEPRINT:

6 KEY PILLARS + 18 QUICK WINS YOU CAN USE NOW

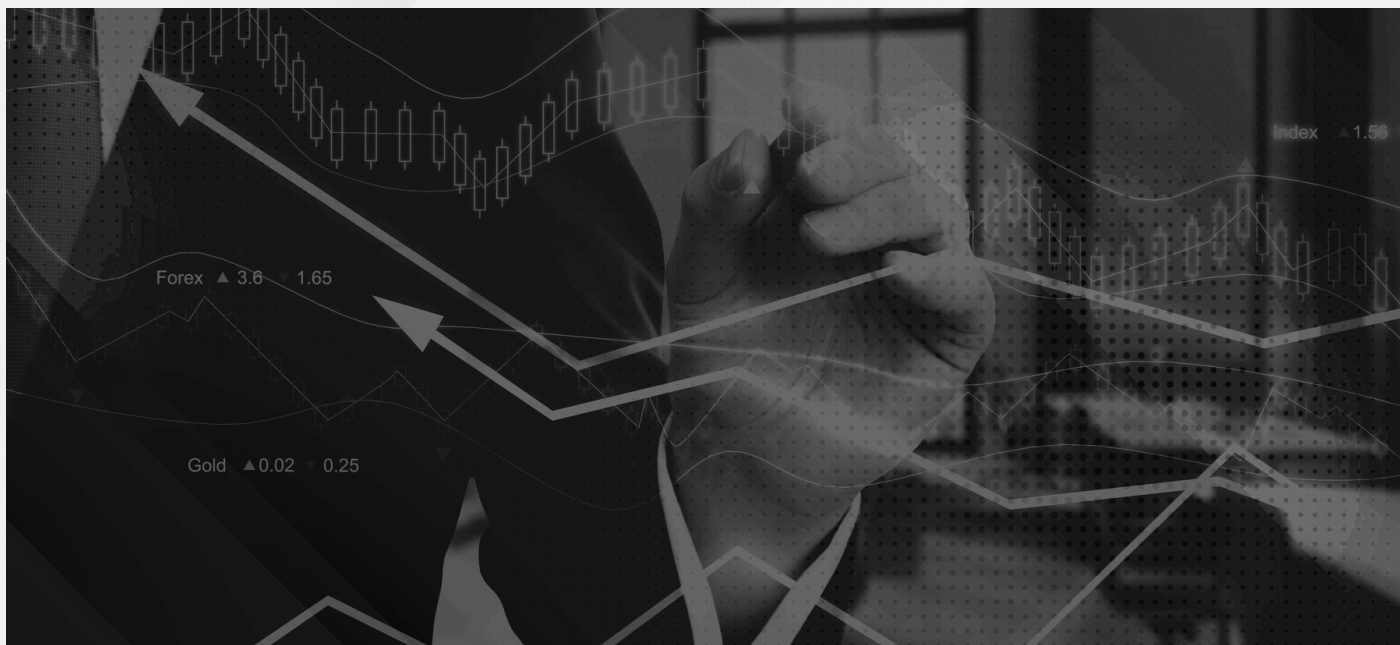
Benchmarks and practical next steps distilled from thousands of successful projects with companies across the U.S.



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Pinnacle
CONSULTING & RECRUITMENT



Modern finance leaders are under pressure to identify value-creation opportunities, serve as trusted advisors to the business, and drive better decisions — all while maintaining accurate, on-time reporting without additional resources.

They're expected to **guide strategy, improve cash flow, enable growth, and build resilient teams**. Yet many finance functions remain buried in manual work, delayed reporting, and outdated systems.

This blueprint distills insights from **thousands of successful projects with hundreds of companies across the United States**. It shows you:

- **Where your finance function stands today** compared to best-in-class teams.
- **What “world-class” really looks like** across the six critical pillars of modern finance.
- **18 practical quick wins** you can start implementing this quarter to accelerate transformation.

Whether you're a CFO, Controller, or finance leader preparing for growth, this guide helps you **move from reactive reporting to proactive leadership** without adding unnecessary complexity or headcount.

Use it as a **benchmarking tool and an action plan**: identify your current level in each pillar, apply the quick wins, and build a finance function ready for the next stage of your company's growth.

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CLOSE & REPORTING

WHAT WORLD-CLASS LOOKS LIKE

A finance team that reliably **closes the books in five days or less**, with most reconciliations automated and review-ready.

Reporting packages go beyond compliance. They deliver **real-time, accurate, and actionable insights** that help leadership steer the business.

BENCHMARKS TO GAUGE YOUR CURRENT STATE

MATURITY LEVEL	TYPICAL CLOSE TIME & PROCESS	REPORTING QUALITY
5 – Best-in-Class	Close <5 days; reconciliations & journal entries largely automated; proactive issue resolution	Reports are accurate, compliant, timely, and drive key decisions
4 – Strong	Close 5–7 days; mix of automation & manual tasks	Mostly accurate/compliant; generally useful for decisions
3 – Moderate	Close 8–10 days; partial automation, recurring manual effort	Adequate but often late or lacking actionable insights
2 – Weak	Close >10 days; heavy manual reconciliations	Accuracy inconsistent, limited decision support
1 – Lagging	Chronic delays; no automation	Frequent errors; reports fail to support leadership

3 QUICK WINS YOU CAN APPLY NOW

1. Establish a Pre-Close Checklist

- Identify every recurring task (recs, accruals, JE approvals).
- Set due dates 2–3 days before period end to avoid last-minute surprises.
- Assign clear ownership and escalate delays early.

2. Automate High-Volume Reconciliations

- Use ERP rules or tools like **BlackLine** or **FloQast** to match transactions automatically.
- Start with bank and intercompany accounts for the fastest impact.

3. Standardize the Reporting Package

- Lock in a **core management pack**: P&L with variance commentary, cash flow, key KPIs.
- Add **visual dashboards** (Power BI / Tableau) to reduce ad-hoc slide building.

PRO TIP

Track “days to close” every month. Best-in-class finance functions treat close time as a KPI and report it to leadership. Even reducing by **1–2 days** creates bandwidth for analysis.

IF YOU'RE STUCK HERE

Your close cycle may be eating up leadership time and delaying strategic insights.

Consider leveraging interim **accounting support to clear backlogs** or to **implement close automation tools** — often the fastest way to move from “manual & late” to “timely & trusted.”

CASH FLOW & WORKING CAPITAL

WHAT WORLD-CLASS LOOKS LIKE

Finance leaders run the business with **clear forward visibility on cash** — accurate rolling forecasts, disciplined AR/AP practices, and optimized inventory.

Leadership has confidence in liquidity and can fund growth without constant fire drills.

BENCHMARKS TO GAUGE YOUR CURRENT STATE

MATURITY LEVEL	CASH FLOW FORECASTING	AR / AP / INVENTORY MANAGEMENT
5 – Best-in-Class	13-week rolling forecast with <5% variance; fully integrated with operations	Optimized DSO/DPO; proactive supplier/customer terms; right-sized inventory
4 – Strong	Forecast mostly accurate with minor variance; regularly updated	Generally efficient collections/payments; some leverage of supplier terms
3 – Moderate	Forecasting inconsistent; variance noticeable	Manual follow-up on AR; AP terms unmanaged; inventory often off target
2 – Weak	Forecasts frequently miss; surprises common	Cash often tight; slow collections; reactive supplier payments; poor inventory visibility
1 – Lagging	No reliable forecasting; cash fire drills	Chronic cash shortages; AR aging high; vendor strain

3 QUICK WINS YOU CAN APPLY NOW

1. Build a Rolling 13-Week Cash Forecast

- Start simple: weekly receipts/disbursements by customer and vendor.
- Use prior actuals to model inflows/outflows; refine variance tracking over time.

2. Negotiate & Standardize Payment Terms

- Review top 20 suppliers and customers.
- Extend DPO where possible; shorten DSO with early-pay discounts or stricter credit terms.
- Document and enforce terms consistently.

3. Launch a Weekly Cash Stand-Up

- 15-minute cross-functional meeting (finance + ops + sales).
- Align on upcoming inflows/outflows, collections efforts, and large purchases to avoid surprises.

PRO TIP

Forecast accuracy drives credibility.
Start tracking your forecast variance every week. Consistently hitting **±5%** variance builds trust with lenders, boards, and leadership.

IF YOU'RE STUCK HERE

Long AR aging or inaccurate forecasts can block growth and damage credibility.

Consider leveraging interim finance support who can quickly redesign cash models, implement collection strategies, and negotiate supplier terms — helping you stabilize cash without adding full-time headcount.

FINANCIAL PLANNING & ANALYSIS (FP&A) & INSIGHTS

WHAT WORLD-CLASS LOOKS LIKE

Finance is a **strategic partner to the business** — delivering accurate, integrated forecasts, scenario modeling, and real-time KPIs that guide decisions. Leadership trusts FP&A to connect financial outcomes with operational drivers.

BENCHMARKS TO GAUGE YOUR CURRENT STATE

MATURITY LEVEL	FORECASTING & PLANNING	KPI TRACKING & INSIGHTS
5 – Best-in-Class	Rolling forecasts fully integrated with strategy & operations; rapid scenario modeling	Comprehensive, real-time KPIs; insights instantly available to leadership
4 – Strong	Forecasts mostly reliable and tied to strategy; some scenario planning	Clear KPIs with timely reporting; some dashboarding
3 – Moderate	Accuracy varies; plans loosely linked to strategy	Basic KPI tracking; delayed or manual insights
2 – Weak	Forecasts often inaccurate; disconnected from operational plans	KPIs poorly defined; insights delayed and inconsistent
1 – Lagging	No reliable forecasting; budgeting done in isolation	No meaningful KPIs; reactive reporting only

3 QUICK WINS YOU CAN APPLY NOW

1. Define the 5 KPIs That Truly Drive Your Business *(or as few as possible)*

- Choose a handful of metrics leadership can act on (e.g., gross margin %, cash conversion cycle, backlog-to-sales ratio).
- Build a simple dashboard (Power BI, Tableau, or Excel) for weekly review.

2. Implement a Rolling Forecast Cadence

- Move from static annual budgets to rolling 12–18 month forecasts updated quarterly.
- Start with revenue, gross margin, and cash; layer in more drivers over time.

3. Introduce Simple Scenario Modeling

- Use driver-based assumptions (volume, price, headcount).
- Run “what if” cases (e.g., 5% volume drop, raw material cost spike) to help leadership prepare for volatility.

PRO TIP

Speed matters. A forecast that's 90% accurate and delivered in a week is more valuable than a 98% accurate model delivered a month late.

IF YOU'RE STUCK HERE

Manual forecasting and delayed insights keep finance reactive.

Consider leveraging **interim FP&A** support or modern planning tools (Workday Adaptive, Planful) to speed up forecasting, integrate operational drivers, and empower leadership with real-time data.

ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS & CONTROLS

WHAT WORLD-CLASS LOOKS LIKE

Your accounting backbone is **accurate, controlled, and scalable**.

Core processes like reconciliations, journal entries, controls, and reporting structures run smoothly with minimal manual intervention.

Audits are uneventful, data flows cleanly into FP&A, and leadership trusts the numbers.

BENCHMARKS TO GAUGE YOUR CURRENT STATE

MATURITY LEVEL	CORE ACCOUNTING PROCESSES	CONTROLS & SCALABILITY
5 – Best-in-Class	Reconciliations and JEs automated; chart of accounts clean and future-ready	Documented controls, strong segregation of duties, easy audit; processes scale with growth
4 – Strong	Mostly timely and accurate with only minor manual cleanup	Key controls exist but may lack documentation or formal testing
3 – Moderate	Some delays or rework; manual entries common	Informal controls, unclear approval thresholds; scalability limited
2 – Weak	Frequent errors/backlogs; inconsistent account ownership	Minimal documented controls; audit issues or findings likely
1 – Lagging	Chronic delays and unreliable data	No clear control framework; risk of fraud/misstatement high

3 QUICK WINS YOU CAN APPLY NOW

1. Map & Document Key Controls

- List critical processes (approvals, JE thresholds, reconciliations, system access).
- Clarify owners and reviewers; close gaps in segregation of duties.

2. Standardize Recurring Journal Entries

- Build templates with required support and clear approval steps.
- Reduces last-minute adjustments and strengthens audit readiness.

3. Simplify & Future-Proof the Chart of Accounts

- Consolidate unused or redundant accounts.
- Align segments to reporting needs (e.g., product line, geography) to make growth and acquisitions easier to integrate.



IF YOU'RE STUCK HERE

Messy accounts, weak controls, or audit findings slow down reporting and create risk.

Interim accounting support can quickly clean up reconciliations, document controls, and build a scalable backbone for growth.

FINANCE TEAM & TALENT

WHAT WORLD-CLASS LOOKS LIKE

Your finance organization is **engaged, well-structured, and built to scale**.

Transactional work is handled efficiently, freeing leadership to focus on strategy.

Leaders hire talent for the company they're building — not just the one they are today — ensuring the team has the skills and capacity to grow with the business. Roles are clear, succession is planned, and the organization can adapt as complexity increases.

BENCHMARKS TO GAUGE YOUR CURRENT STATE

MATURITY LEVEL	STRATEGIC FOCUS & ROLE CLARITY	ENGAGEMENT & SCALABILITY
5 – Best-in-Class	Leadership spends 70%+ on strategy; clear roles & succession plans in place	Highly engaged, right skill mix, easily scales with growth or transformation
4 – Strong	Mostly strategic with occasional transactional pull-in	Generally good engagement and skills; minor gaps
3 – Moderate	Balanced between strategy and transactions; roles not fully optimized	Mixed engagement/talent; concerns about scaling with growth
2 – Weak	Leadership stuck in day-to-day work; unclear role boundaries	Significant talent gaps, low engagement, retention issues
1 – Lagging	Entirely transactional; no capacity for strategy	Disengaged team, high turnover, not built for scale

3 QUICK WINS YOU CAN APPLY NOW

1. Run a “Strategic vs. Transactional” Time Audit

- Have leadership track time for 2 weeks across strategic vs. tactical tasks.
- Reassign, automate, or outsource low-value work to free up leadership focus.

2. Hire for the Company You're Building — Not Just the One You Are Today

- The best finance leaders bring in talent **before** it's strictly needed.
- Hiring someone who has scaled larger organizations gives you a “cheat code.” They help drive growth and won't be out of place as the company gets bigger.

3. Use Flexible Talent Models Strategically

- Leverage interim or fractional specialists to cover day-to-day workload, handle spikes, and keep critical projects moving forward — all without adding permanent overhead.

IF YOU'RE STUCK HERE

If leadership is buried in transactions or struggling to retain key talent, consider **rebalancing your org structure and using interim support** to bridge gaps.

This creates space for strategic finance work without over-hiring and allows your most important projects to keep moving forward without being slowed down by day-to-day work.

PRO TIP

Build capacity before you feel the pain. Bringing in experienced, scale-ready talent early creates space for strategy and prevents growth stalls later.

TECHNOLOGY & SYSTEMS

WHAT WORLD-CLASS LOOKS LIKE

Your finance tech stack is **automated, integrated, and scalable**.

Core systems (ERP, reporting, workflow tools) provide real-time visibility, reduce manual work, and adapt easily as the company grows — enabling finance to focus on insights, not data wrangling.

BENCHMARKS TO GAUGE YOUR CURRENT STATE

MATURITY LEVEL	SYSTEMS & AUTOMATION	DATA VISABILITY & SCALABILITY
5 – Best-in-Class	Highly automated workflows across AP/AR, close, and reporting; minimal manual entry	Real-time, reliable data; systems scale with growth, acquisitions, and complexity
4 – Strong	Mostly automated core processes; some manual patches remain	Good visibility; systems support most current needs but may need upgrades soon
3 – Moderate	Partial automation; workarounds and spreadsheets fill gaps	Data often delayed or fragmented; scalability limited
2 – Weak	Manual-heavy processes; outdated or disconnected systems	Poor data visibility; scaling creates significant pain
1 – Lagging	Legacy systems bottleneck every process	Data unreliable; growth stalls due to system limitations

3 QUICK WINS YOU CAN APPLY NOW

1. Inventory Your Current Systems & Untapped Features

- Document every finance tool in use (ERP, AP/AR automation, reporting, BI).
- Identify unused modules or features you're already paying for that could automate work immediately.

2. Automate a High-Impact Workflow First

- **Start with AP approvals, expense reporting, or reconciliations** — areas with high manual volume and easy ROI.
- Pilot tools like Tipalti, Ramp, or BlackLine to build early wins and buy-in.

3. Integrate BI or Dashboarding for Real-Time Visibility

- Implement Power BI, Tableau, or Looker to give leadership self-service access to key metrics.
- Start simple: automate monthly reporting packs and phase into live dashboards.

PRO TIP

Don't rip and replace too soon. Often, existing ERPs have underused automation modules. Unlocking those can deliver fast ROI and reduce change fatigue.

IF YOU'RE STUCK HERE

Manual processes and fragmented systems stall growth and eat team capacity.

Leverage Interim finance support who can quickly assess gaps, configure automation, and implement dashboards — helping your team shift from manual reporting to real-time insights without a full ERP overhaul.

WHO *IS* PINNACLE CONSULTING?

Pinnacle is an **accounting and finance consulting firm** that helps companies with **interim support and project-based work** within their accounting/finance teams.

Our consultants typically support the **CFO, CEO/president, Vice President/Director of Finance, or Corporate Controller** depending on the need and company size.

Clients we serve normally have revenue between **20 MM to 2 Billion** with a sweet spot being **70 MM to 700 MM**.

AREAS WE CAN HELP:

We leverage the expertise of our CFO & Controller level consultants to support our clients nationwide in the following areas:

General Accounting

- Accounts Payable & Accounts Receivable
- Payroll & Benefits Accounting
- Fixed Assets Accounting
- General Ledger Management
- Month-end & Year-end Close
- Audit Preparation & Support

Cost Accounting

- Cost Analysis & Optimization
- Overhead Analysis & Activity-Based Costing
- Product & Inventory Costing
- Standard Costing & Variance Analysis
- ERP Integration & Cost Reporting

Financial Planning & Analysis

(Corporate FP&A and Business Unit Level FP&A)

- Budgeting & Forecasting
- Strategic Financial Planning
- Profitability & Performance Analysis
- Cost & Expense Management
- Reporting & Dashboard Development
- Data Analysis & Visualization

Internal Audit

- Internal Controls Assessment & Optimization
- Risk Assessment & Mitigation
- Operational Audits & Process Improvement
- Compliance Audits & Regulatory Support
- Audit Readiness & External Audit Support
- Process Documentation
- SOX Compliance & Readiness

Technical Accounting

- SEC Reporting
- M&A Due Diligence
- Equity & Stock-Based Compensation
- Accounting Standards Implementation (ex. ASC 606,842)

Tax

- Income Tax
- SALT
- Sales & Use
- M&A Tax Support
- Tax Planning & Strategy

Treasury

- Cash Flow Management & Forecasting
- Treasury Systems & Technology
- Liquidity & Working Capital Optimization
- Risk Management & Hedging
- Debt & Capital Structure

TWO MAIN PROJECTS

At Pinnacle, we recognize that businesses face unique challenges that require different types of support.

Our consulting services fall into two main categories: **Need-Based Projects** and **Technical-Based Projects**. Whether your company is experiencing rapid growth, a key departure, or a transition, we provide the expertise to ensure your finance and accounting operations remain strong and efficient.

PROJECT 1: NEED-BASED

Many companies face sudden staffing gaps or increased workloads that make it difficult to maintain financial operations. Pinnacle provides immediate support to help businesses navigate these situations efficiently.

- Rapidly growing company where existing staff can't keep up with volume. Struggling to get financial reports out on time.
- Someone just left the company and the team won't be able to handle the workload without them.
- Someone critical just left the company and they want to get an interim in there to help with the knowledge transfer.
- The company is thinking about selling and wants to get their accounting/finance team buttoned up to increase the value of the company.
 - Put procedures in place.
 - Enhanced reporting capabilities (cash flow, etc...)
- Example: CFO/Controller gives notice. We provide an interim-CFO/Controller to keep the finance function stabilized until the full-time person is hired. This interim resource makes sure the department doesn't fall behind and ensures a smooth onboarding process for the new hire, keeping them from inheriting a mess.

PROJECT 2: TECHNICAL BASED

Some business challenges require specialized technical knowledge to ensure compliance, accurate reporting, and effective financial oversight. Pinnacle offers experienced consultants with expertise in complex accounting regulations and financial systems.

- Company is implementing a new ERP system and needs someone who can help from an accounting/finance standpoint.
- Company needs help complying with a new accounting pronouncement such as ASC 842,606.
- Company needs help with due diligence when thinking of buying a company.
- Company needs help with due diligence when they are thinking of selling.
- Example: Company had an ERP implementation gone wrong. No one on the internal finance team knows how to get the reporting out of the system. We will deploy one of our consultants to help bring the system up to date and train the internal team on how to get what they need.

By applying our industry expertise and hands-on approach, Pinnacle supports businesses in navigating financial complexities and driving long-term success.

PINNACLE IN-ACTION

At Pinnacle, we help businesses turn financial and operational challenges into opportunities for growth. Our team works side by side with clients to create customized solutions that deliver real impact. Below are **real-life examples** of how our expertise and hands-on approach have helped companies tackle complex financial situations and move forward with confidence.

HELPING AN ACCELERATED FILER FILE THEIR 10Q AFTER LOSING A KEY FINANCIAL LEADER 7 WEEKS BEFORE IT'S DUE DATE

Turning a 7-week leadership gap into a timely 10Q success.

THE SITUATION:

A 1.2-billion-dollar public company had a key financial leader give notice just 7 weeks before their 10Q was due leaving the CFO and the rest of the leadership team in fight or flight mode get their Q-filed timely and accurately.

THE CHALLENGE:

Our client needed someone capable of consolidating their 3 business units, leading a team of inexperienced staff, being the liaison to their Big 4 auditor, helping the shared service team reduce the time it took to close, and finally, draft a presentation for the board of directors to be given prior to filling the Q.

OUR SOLUTION:

We provided an experienced financial leader capable of managing all related processes, people, and technology at a company of this size and complexity.

THE RESULT:

Our consultant improved the close process, worked with the external auditors, and drafted and gave the presentation to the board of directors leading to a successful 10Q filing.

STABILIZING A PE-BACKED COMPANY THROUGH A PERIOD OF RAPID EXPANSION

How we provided interim leadership that stabilized financial operations and helped work towards their aggressive growth goals.

THE SITUATION:

A private equity firm was in the process of acquiring businesses across multiple locations. With rapid expansion came the need for stronger financial oversight, including improved recordkeeping, financial reporting, and overall fiscal management. The firm required an interim CFO to stabilize operations, implement best practices, consolidate financials, and ensure accurate reporting during this period of growth.

THE CHALLENGE:

The firm faced significant financial oversight challenges due to its rapid expansion. They needed an interim CFO who could quickly assess existing processes, identify gaps, and implement improvements to enhance financial reporting, transparency, and overall fiscal management.

OUR SOLUTION:

Pinnacle provided an experienced interim CFO who immediately stabilized the firm's financial operations. He assessed current recordkeeping, identified inefficiencies, and implemented streamlined systems to improve financial reporting and transparency. Beyond daily financial management, the CFO played a crucial role in aligning financial objectives with the firm's growth strategy, working closely with leadership to ensure long-term success.

THE RESULT:

The interim CFO's impact was so significant that the client retained him long-term. His leadership in refining financial operations and providing strategic insight made him an indispensable part of the firm's leadership team. By providing the right interim leadership, we not only addressed the immediate financial challenges but also delivered a lasting solution—securing a trusted, full-time CFO who continues to drive financial stability and future growth.

Want to discuss your specific situation? Reach out to one of our experts for a confidential discussion.



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