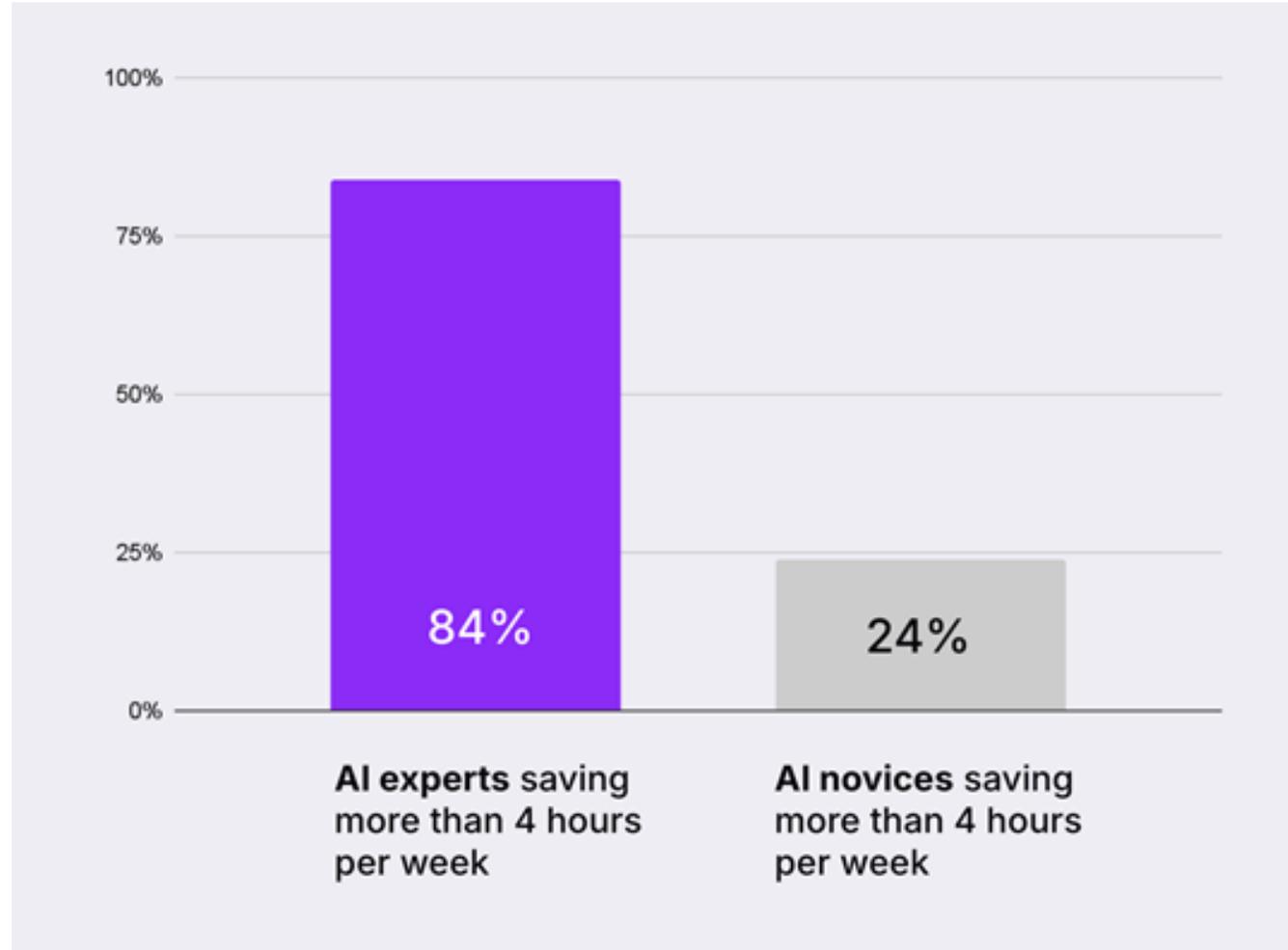


# How can I make AI a daily habit?

An introduction to AI in Finance

Oli Deacon

# Why does AI matter to me?



# Today's focus

- What is AI, how will AI evolve and how will it affect finance?
- Given that likely future, how can we make AI a daily habit?
- What are the skills needed to get there?
- What action can you take next to make progress?

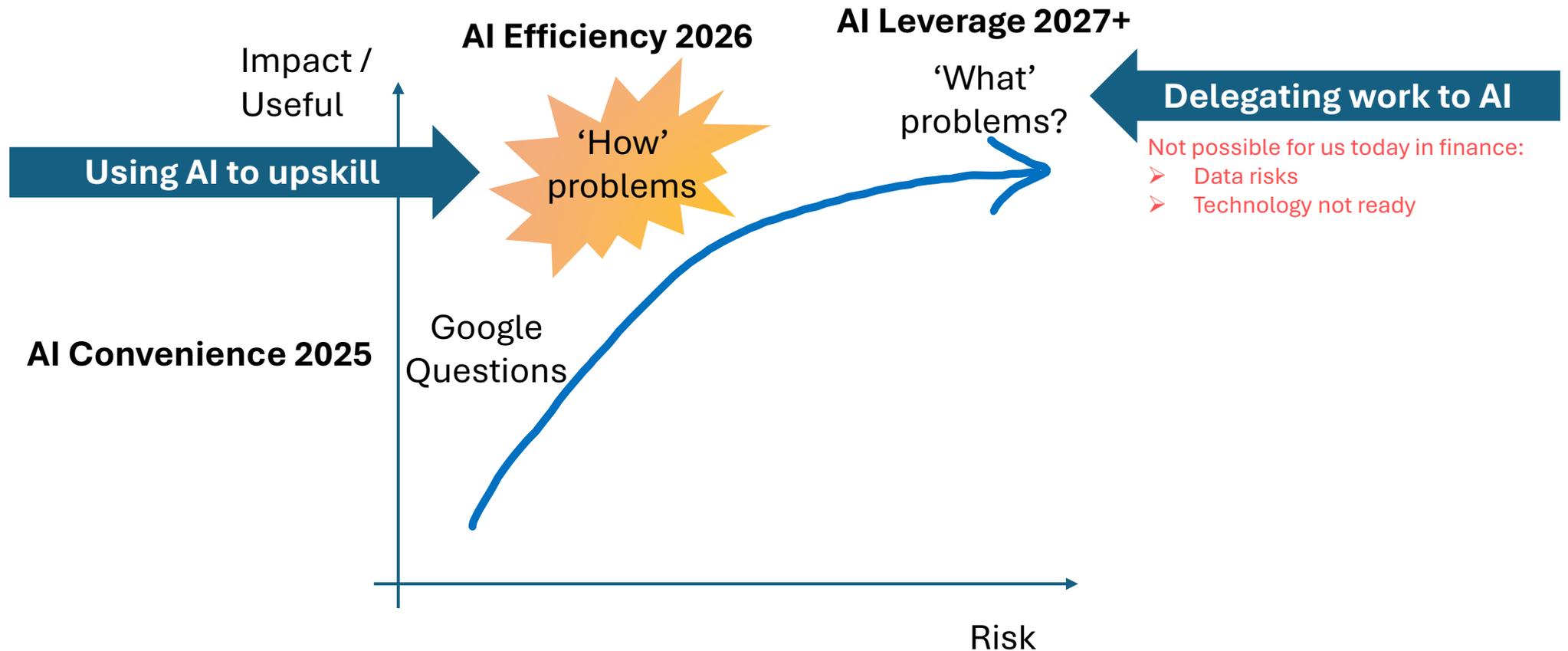
# Introduction: Oli Deacon



- Innovation and leadership  
[www.oliverdeaconcoaching.com](http://www.oliverdeaconcoaching.com)
- Former Finance Director at Microsoft
- FCA with ICAEW, PCC certified coach with ICF
- ACA qualified at Deloitte, followed by a variety of industry roles leading multi-national finance teams at Carphone Warehouse and Best Buy Europe
- [www.linkedin.com/in/olideacon/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/olideacon/)

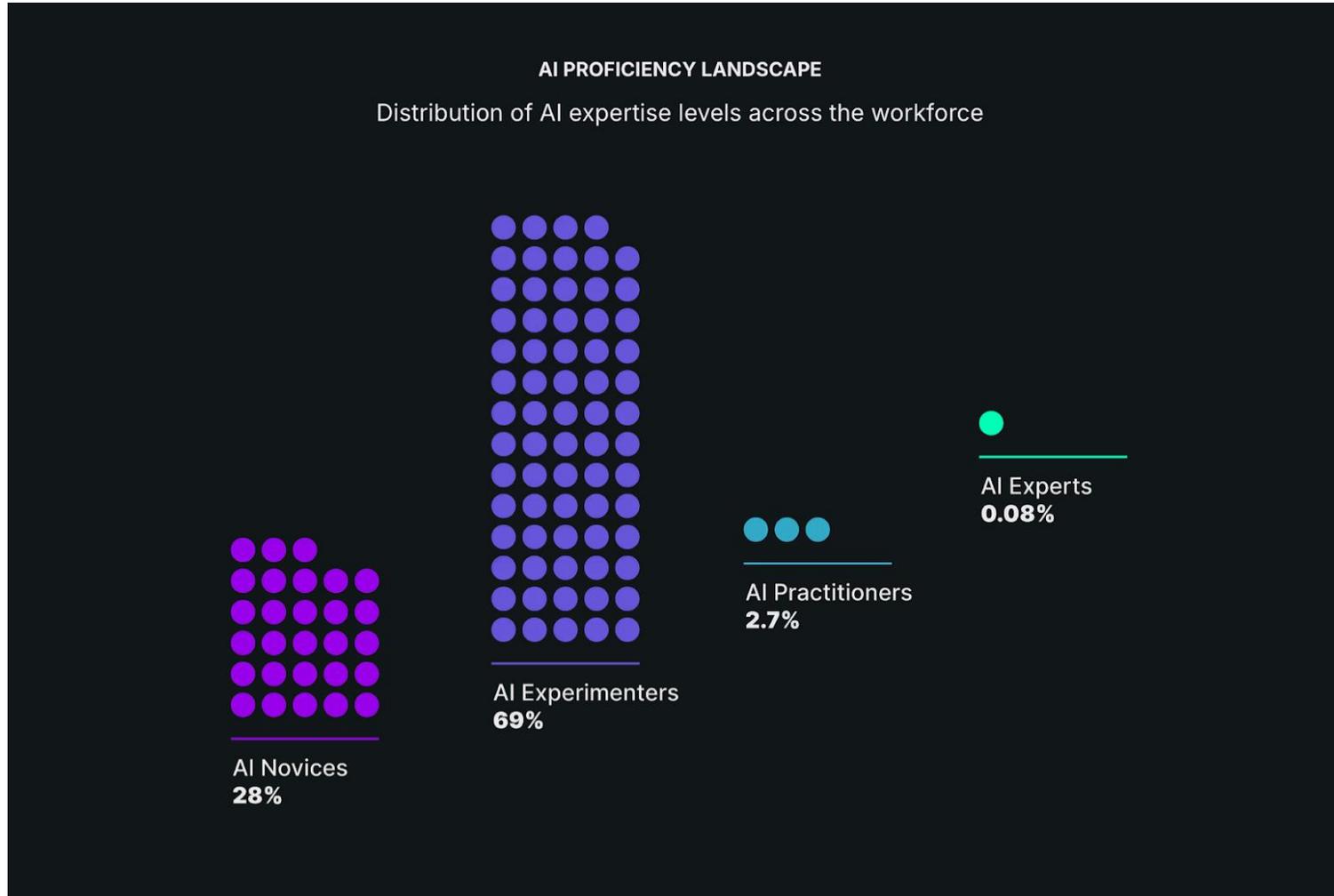
# What is AI?

# Simplifying how AI can help us – how useful is AI?



'How' problems are a relatively low-risk, high reward very useful place to start

# How proficient are we?



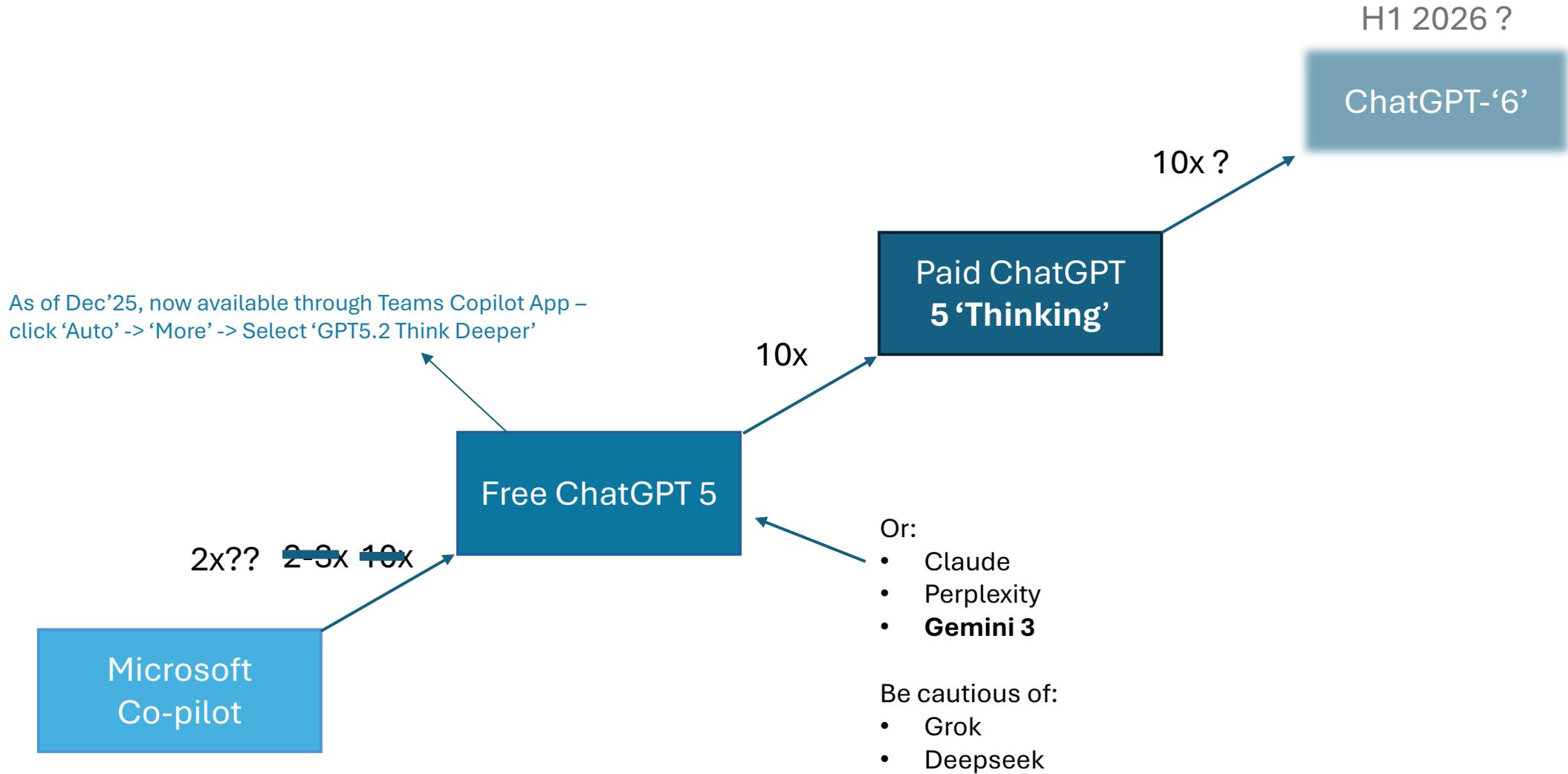
5,000 knowledge workers surveyed in the U.S., U.K., and Canada, Jan'26

# What are we using AI for today?

Rank	Use Case	% of knowledge workers who use AI this way
1	Google search replacement	14.1 %
2	Draft generation	9.6%
3	Grammar and tone editing	5.7%
4	Basic data analysis	3.8%
5	Code generation	3.3%
6	Ideation & brainstorming	3.2%
7	Meeting support (e.g., notes)	2.7%
8	Document summarization	2.0%
9	Learning and skill development	1.6%
10	Task and process automation	1.6%

5,000 knowledge workers surveyed in the U.S., U.K., and Canada, Jan'26

# Which AI tools are best?



# How will we see AI being 'useful'?

**AI outcomes for finance need to sit in 1 or more of 4 buckets:**

Speed  
(Cycle Time)

Accuracy  
(Error Reduction)

Risk  
(Auditability /  
Compliance)

Economics  
(Margin / Cash)

# What are the Opportunities for Finance?

## Streamline Processes

AI automates tasks, reduces errors, and provides real-time financial insights.

‘How’

## Enhanced Financial Analysis & Forecasting

AI enables predictive analytics and scenario modeling for more informed decision-making.

‘What’

## Data-Driven Decision Making

AI aggregates and analyzes large datasets, providing actionable insights for insights for strategic planning.

‘What’

## Fraud Detection and Risk Management

AI identifies anomalies, detects fraud, and helps assess and monitor financial financial risks.

‘What’

## Improved Reporting and Compliance

AI automates financial statements, legal work, tax filings and regulatory reports, ensuring compliance.

‘What’

## Expense and Cost Management

AI categorizes expenses, identifies cost-saving opportunities, and optimizes procurement.

‘What’

## Strategic Decision Support

AI assists in evaluating mergers, acquisitions, investments, and simulating market trends.

‘What’

## Workforce Productivity

AI reduces time spent on routine tasks, allowing finance teams to focus on strategy.

‘How’

# What are the Risks for finance?

## Data Privacy & Security Concerns

'What'

Handling sensitive financial data in AI systems increases the risk of breaches and leaks.

## Model Bias and Errors

'What'

AI models trained on biased or incomplete data can produce misleading results, eroding trust.

## Over-Reliance on Automation

'How'

Excessive reliance on AI can erode human judgment and lead to undetected errors in financial processes.

## Integration Challenges

'How'

Legacy systems may struggle to integrate with modern AI tools, requiring significant upfront costs and effort.

## Regulatory and Compliance Risks

'What'

AI systems may not fully align with regulatory requirements, exposing companies to legal penalties.

## Job Displacement and Skills Gap

'How'

AI automation may lead to job displacement, requiring significant reskilling efforts for finance professionals.

## Environmental Impact

'How'

Large-scale AI implementation in finance can increase energy consumption and carbon footprints.

## Resistance to Change

'How'

Employees may resist adopting AI solutions, slowing down the transition to AI-driven finance.

# What are we doing about it?

## Maybe not enough.....

In companies under 500 employees, **20% of workers say they rarely or never use AI**, and only 16% use it every day, according to latest research from Section AI.

Why is this? 4 key issues:

1. Many SMB leaders **don't know** how to use AI at all (or even know what it is)

2. Those who are using AI are using it for its most **basic use cases**

3. Leaders also don't think AI can transform their work (**just their subordinates**)

4. AI hasn't been rolled out officially, so workers are resorting to **"shadow AI"**

# Will AI use reduce our cognitive ability?

## Working with AI is hard!

2 core AI skills:

### AI Prompting

Write effective prompts for a variety of complex situations

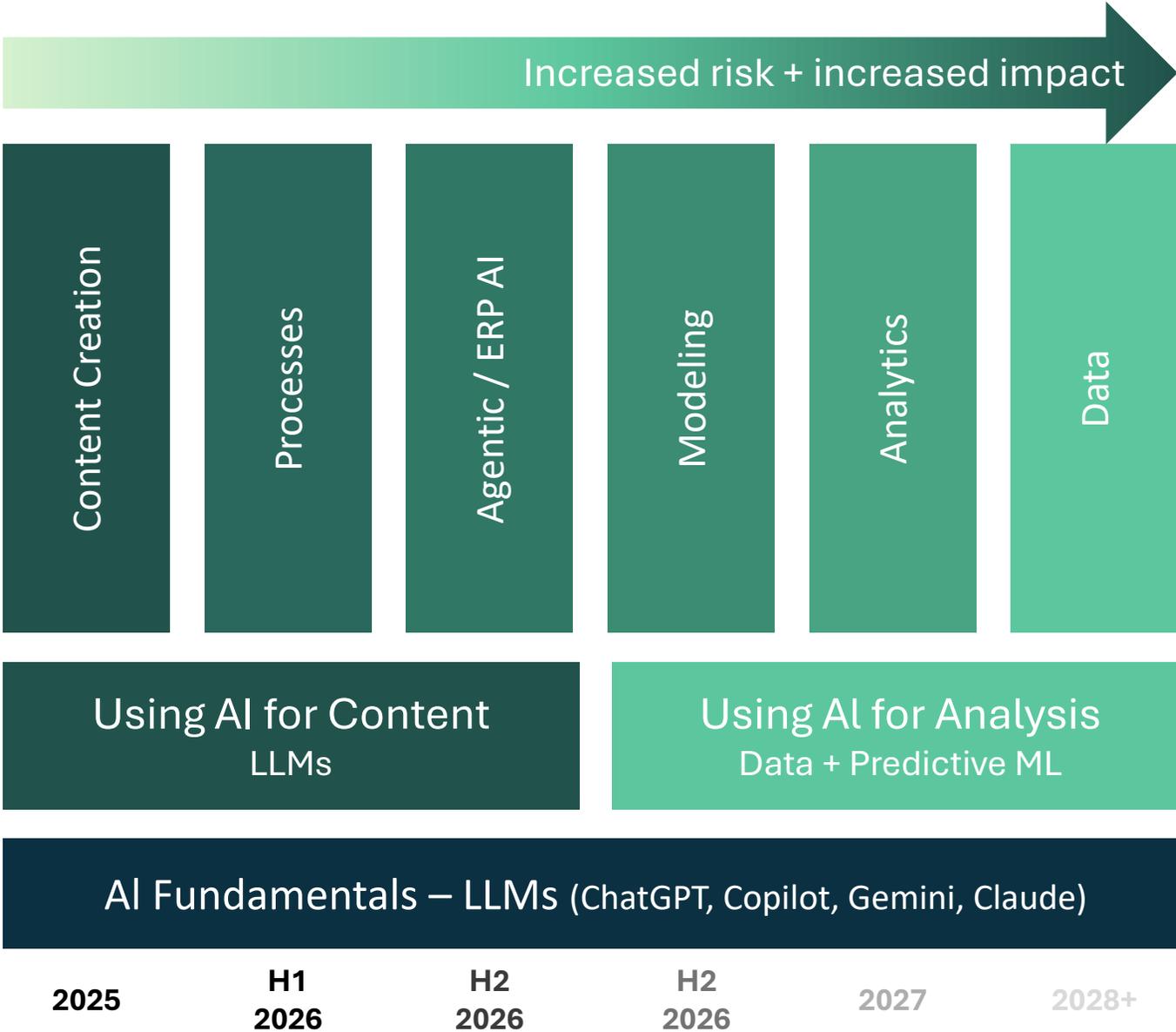
### AI Checking

Check answers and discard below-standard AI work

Doing this well takes effort – requiring a strong cognitive input

# What does this mean for finance?

# AI in Finance Framework



# What does all this mean for me?

AI probably won't take your job, but ~~someone who is great at using AI might~~

Map out your role  
as it exists now

- Document what you **actually** do
- Focus on AI-able tasks:  
repetitive work, processes, data  
analysis, predictable decisions
- Make this list your AI 'to-do'

Switch effort to  
higher value work

- For each AI 'to-do', what higher-value  
work could you be doing instead?
- For example, AI creates a draft,  
human refines the 'why' or exceptions
- The goal is not to do less, it's to **scale  
your impact**

Focus on uniquely  
human impact

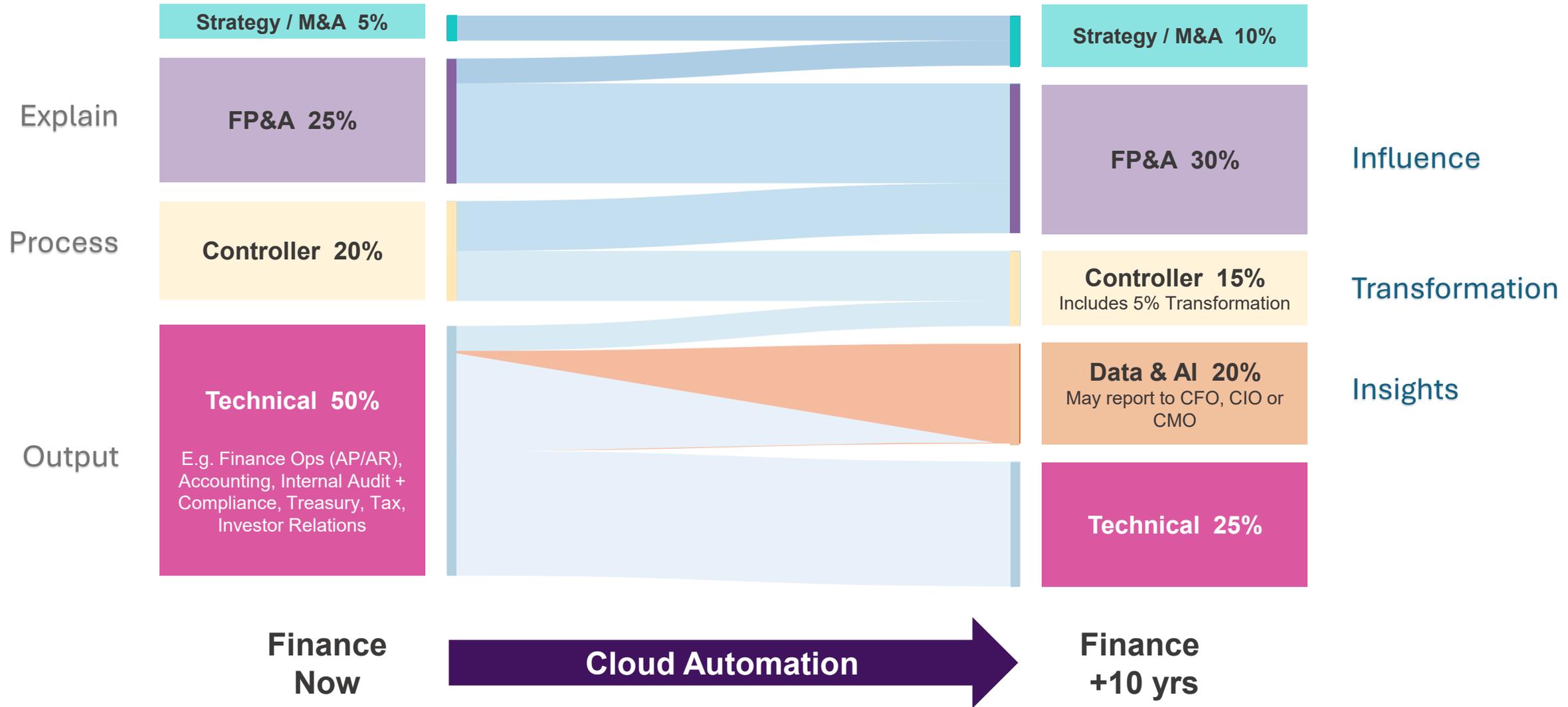
- What skills differentiate you in an  
AI-powered future?
- For example, business partnering,  
relationship building, or auditing  
and judging AI outputs
- Focus your development efforts  
here, deliver real business impact.

...our roles are likely to be gradually eroded by AI. How will you react?

How will this impact finance careers?  
What skills are needed?

# Case Study: Finance +10 years - People

## Finance Headcount Allocation



# World Economic Forum | Future of Jobs Report | Team Impacts

## Top 20 job roles in increasing and decreasing demand across industries

Role of Decreasing Demand	Finance role?
1 Data Entry Clerks	Yes – Fin Ops
2 Administrative and Executive Secretaries	
3 Accounting, Bookkeeping and Payroll Clerks	Yes – Controller, Technical and Fin Ops
4 Accountants and Auditors	Yes – Technical
5 Assembly and Factory Workers	
6 Business Services and Administration Managers	Yes – Fin Ops
7 Client Information and Customer Service Workers	
8 General and Operations Managers	
9 Mechanics and Machinery Repairers	
10 Material-Recording and Stock-Keeping Clerks	Yes – Controller
11 Financial Analysts	Yes – FP&A
12 Postal Service Clerks	
13 Sales Reps for Wholesale, Manufacturing, Technology and Science Products	
14 Relationship Managers	
15 Bank Tellers and Related Clerks	
16 Door-To-Door Sales, News and Street Vendors	
17 Electronics & Telecoms Installers & Repairers	
18 Human Resources Specialists	
19 Training and Development Specialists	
20 Construction Laborers	

Roles of Increasing Demand	Finance Role?
1 Data Analysts and Scientists	Yes – Data and AI
2 AI and Machine Learning Specialists	Yes – Data and AI
3 Big Data Specialists	Yes – Data and AI
4 Digital Marketing and Strategy Specialists	
5 Process Automation Specialists	Yes – Controller
6 Business Development Professionals	Yes – Business Partnering
7 Digital Transformation Specialists	Yes – Controller
8 Information Security Analysts	
9 Software and Applications Developers	
10 Internet of Things Specialists	
11 Project Managers	Yes – Agile Champions
12 Business Services and Administration Managers	
13 Database and Network Professionals	
14 Robotics Engineers	
15 Strategic Advisors	Yes – Strategy
16 Management and Organization Analysts	
17 FinTech Engineers	
18 Mechanics and Machinery Repairers	
19 Organizational Development Specialists	
20 Risk Management Specialists	Yes – Internal Audit



# What skills are needed to get there?



## Technical training



Data science



Big Data  
Programming  
languages



AI & Machine  
Learning



Analytics and Data  
Presentation



Transformation

~~Data~~ Core Finance Work



## Non-technical training



Presenting and  
Influencing



Communication and  
Story Telling



Networking and  
relationship building



Leadership and  
Management



Personal  
Effectiveness

Business Partnering

# The GrowCFO Skills Gap Framework

GrowCFO surveyed 100s of finance leaders & teams. Beyond qualification, they found these skills required but lacking.



# How do I make AI a daily habit?

# Build of AI skills in finance

## Leaders Strategy

Agentic AI Chatbots

Influencing Organisational Strategy

AI Digital Twins

## 10% champions Leverage

Improving & Analysing Data

Building AI Agents

Writing Code in Python or VBA

## 50% monthly Efficiency

Solving a Complex Problem

Analysing and Fixing Broken Processes

Preparing for Conversations

## 90% weekly Convenience

Learning How to Do Something

Researching Topics Quickly

Drafting and Editing Content

Through 2026.....

# Tools update – Jan'26





Claude



Excel

ACME CORP., INC.	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1 Consolidated Income Statement					
2 (in millions, except per share data)					
3 Fiscal Year Ended December 31,					
4					
5 Revenue	\$3,200	\$7,450	\$8,350	\$9,800	\$12,200
6 Cost of goods sold	587	551	580	571	554
7 Total revenue	\$3,200	\$7,450	\$8,350	\$9,800	\$12,200
8					
9 Restaurant operating costs	\$1,330	\$1,400	\$1,390	\$1,390	\$1,400
10 Labor	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
11 Occupancy	100	100	100	100	100
12 Other operating costs	\$230	\$300	\$290	\$290	\$300
13 Total restaurant operating costs	\$1,330	\$1,400	\$1,390	\$1,390	\$1,400
14					
15 Gross profit	\$1,870	\$3,700	\$3,960	\$4,310	\$5,350
16					
17 Operating expenses	300	300	300	300	300
18 General and administrative expenses	100	100	100	100	100
19 Depreciation and amortization	200	200	200	200	200
20 Other operating costs	50	50	50	50	50
21 Total operating expenses	300	300	300	300	300
22 Income from operations	\$1,570	\$3,400	\$3,660	\$4,010	\$4,950
23					
24 Interest and other income, net	50	50	50	50	50
25 Income before income taxes	\$1,620	\$3,450	\$3,710	\$4,060	\$5,000
26 Income tax expense	100	100	100	100	100
27 Net income	\$1,520	\$3,350	\$3,610	\$3,960	\$4,900
28					

Operating expenses (D&A, D&A, Pre-opening costs, Impairment)

Interest and other income

Income taxes

**Formulas remain in black (as they should):**

- All total/subtotal rows: Total revenue, Total restaurant operating costs, Gross profit, Total operating expenses, Income from operations, Income before income taxes, Net income
- All key metrics calculations

All hardcoded inputs from the 10-K filings are now properly formatted in blue according to financial modeling standards!

What can I do for you?

Accept all edits





## OpenClaw

THE AI THAT ACTUALLY DOES THINGS.

Clears your inbox, sends emails, manages your calendar, checks you in for flights.  
All from WhatsApp, Telegram, or any chat app you already use.

ACME Corp.  
**Board Report: Drivers of Performance & Strategic Actions - July 2024**

**DRIVER 1: HIGH-QUALITY, HIGH-VALUE, HIGH MARGIN PROJECTS**

WHAT (KPIs)

Revenue vs. Target:

EBITDA Margin:

WHY (EXPLANATION)

- Increased sales in Q3 due to new product launch.
- Cost-saving initiatives implemented in manufacturing reduced overhead.

**DRIVER 2: SPEED OF DELIVERY & EFFICIENT EXECUTION**

WHAT (KPIs)

Production Efficiency:

On-Time Delivery:

WHY (EXPLANATION)

- Supply chain disruptions impacting raw material availability.
- Higher-than-expected employee turnover in the sales team.

**DRIVER 3: PROFITABILITY OF PROJECTS**

WHAT (KPIs)

Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT):

Net Promoter Score (NPS):

WHY (EXPLANATION)

- Potential to expand into the South American market.
- Investment in automation technology to further improve efficiency.
- Strategic partnership with a key distributor.

**SO WHAT? (CONSOLIDATED QUESTIONS & NEXT STEPS)**

**Strategic Questions for Board Discussion:**

- How can we mitigate the supply chain risks in the short term?
- What are the most effective strategies to reduce employee turnover?
- Should we accelerate investment in automation technology?
- What resources are needed to pursue the South American expansion?

**Proposed Action Items & Owners:**

- Finalize supply chain contingency plan (Owner: COO, by Aug 15)
- Develop retention program for sales team (Owner: HR Director, by Aug 31)
- Present automation investment proposal (Owner: CTO, next meeting)
- Conduct market feasibility study for South America (Owner: CSO, by Sep 30)

# Tools update – 4 box template in Nano Banana Pro 3

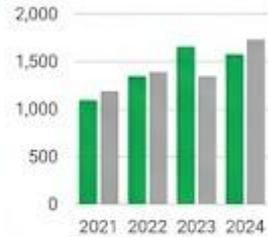
ACME Corp.

## Board Report: Drivers of Performance & Strategic Actions - July 2024

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#### WHAT (KPIs)

##### Revenue vs. Target



##### EBITDA Margin



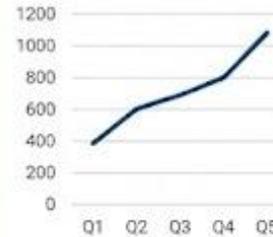
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##### Production Efficiency



##### On-Time Delivery



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# Today, we'll focus on 4 skills

Foundational:  
Researching Topics  
Quickly

Intermediate:  
Analysing and Fixing a  
Broken Process

Intermediate:  
Solve Problems with AI

Advanced:  
Building a CustomGPT

# 1. Researching Topics Quickly

1. Download **ChatGPT, Claude and Perplexity Apps**
  2. Ask each a knowledge-based question you've considered in the last week
  3. How did each do?
- Ask a follow up question to one to dig in more deeply

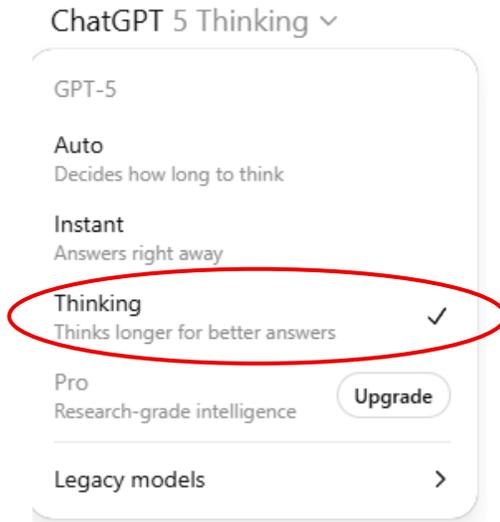
## 2. Improving a broken process

- Improve broken or sub-optimal processes with the following
- Ensure ‘thinking’ mode is selected

### **AI Prompt:**

Act as a transformation consultant advising a finance manager in [industry]. [Describe: SITUATION. ISSUE. OPPORTUNITY.] How could we automate and improve the process? What low-code or no-code tools could help us? What other questions could we answer in order to improve the response?

# Fixing our broken processes



Thought for 30 seconds

Act as a transformation consultant advising a finance manager in the NHS. Our teams are correcting the same mistakes in journals each month, rather than fixing them at source. What could we do to improve this? What free or low cost tools could help? Across payroll and invoices. Mostly in excel. Loading into North East patches accounting system based on Oracle

# Fixing our broken processes

Thought for 30 seconds

Below is a practical, NHS-friendly playbook you can use to shift your finance team from “*fixing journals after the fact*” to “*getting them right first time*.” I’ve put the recommendations in roughly the order most organisations adopt them, and flagged specific free / low-cost tools that work well in an Oracle-based North-East Patches environment.

## 2. Standardise data entry in Excel (the cheapest immediate win)

### b. Add a one-click pre-upload checker

- **VBA macro** (already bundled with Office) loops through the sheet, surfaces first 20 errors, and stops the upload.
- More scalable: **a Python script** (Anaconda is free) that reads the file with **pandas**, runs regex tests (e.g., correct cost-centre mask), and produces a separate *error report* tab.

# Fixing our broken processes

## 3. Exploit Oracle's native validation features

Feature	Cost	What it prevents	
Web ADI (journals, AP invoices)	Included in your E-Business licence	Validates against account segment security, cross-validation rules, flex-fields, and returns error messages directly to the spreadsheet before upload <a href="https://docs.oracle.com">docs.oracle.com</a>	
Cross-validation rules in Oracle GL	Free	Stops invalid segment combinations (classic payroll errors such as salary code + balance-sheet cost centre).	
Descriptive flex-fields with value-set validation	Free	Forces a valid NHS cost centre or ESR position number on import.	

*Tip:* Push your "staging" Excel template via Web ADI; users retain Excel but get Oracle's server-side checks for free.

# Fixing our broken processes

Thought for 24 seconds

Below is a **five-day “Python for NHS Finance” sprint** that gets a non-technical team from *zero* to *“I can automate my own Excel corrections.”* It assumes you:

- already have Microsoft 365 Business/Enterprise (so **Python-in-Excel** is now generally available on Windows builds 2408+ or on the web) [support.microso...](#) [directionforward...](#)
- can install **Anaconda** (free) on at least one shared laptop for anything Excel can't yet do.

If those two prerequisites are in place, the schedule below fits into normal working hours ( $\approx$  1.5 hrs teaching + 1 hr hands-on each day). All resources are free or licence-covered.

# Fixing our broken processes

The answers are a bit generic for our situation. Write a world-class prompt that I could edit in order to get an answer that is highly applicable to our needs

You are an operations-to-digital transformation consultant specialised in UK public-sector finance. Act as my expert advisor.

## \*\*\*\*\* ORGANISATION SNAPSHOT \*\*\*\*\*

- NHS entity type: [e.g., Acute Trust / ICS / Community]
- Region & patch: [e.g., North East & North Cumbria]
- Finance team size & roles: [e.g., 12 WTE – 1 Finance Mgr, 3 Mgmt Acct, 8 Assistants]
- Core systems: Oracle E-Business Suite R12 (UKS), Excel 365, ESR for payroll
- Data flows in scope: Payroll costing, AP invoices, manual journals, Web ADI uploads
- Current skill-set: Strong Excel / Power Query, **\*\*no Python yet\*\***
- Annual correcting journals: [e.g., 420/month worth £7 m]
- Top three recurring error codes or GL combinations:
  1. [Cost centre 123456 + subjective 9110]
  2. [...]
  3. [...]

## \*\*\*\*\* WHAT WE NEED \*\*\*\*\*

- Outcome #1 Cut monthly correcting journals by [e.g., 60 %] inside 6 months
- Outcome #2 Upskill 3 staff to run automated validations in ≤ 4 weeks
- Cost constraints: Free or ≤ £1 k per year SaaS/licensing
- Security constraints: No patient data leaves NHSmail / ODS network
- Change bandwidth: 2 hrs per day available for process-improvement work

## \*\*\*\*\* DELIVERABLES YOU MUST RETURN \*\*\*\*\*

1. **\*\*Root-cause heat map\*\*** – why these errors happen in OUR context, ranked by effort/impact
2. **\*\*Four-week action plan\*\*** (Gantt style) showing quick wins & longer-term fixes

## 3. Solve problems with AI

- Think of a **complex problem**. Write **3 sentences outlining the issue**.
- Copy and paste into **ChatGPT**

Use the following prompts to figure out for your problem:

1. What root causes could be generating this issue?
2. What hypotheses could be tested?
3. What tests could be run, what data could you collect?
4. What action could be taken if the hypothesis is right?

# 4. Creating CustomGPTs

## Step 1 - Access the "Explore GPTs" Feature

Go to the ChatGPT platform, navigate to the "Explore GPTs" section, and select "Create a GPT." Ensure you have a ChatGPT Plus subscription, as it's required for this feature.

## Step 2 - Name Your GPT and Set its Purpose

In the create section, give your GPT a name "This GPT should be called Finance Coach Pro" and describe its purpose. For example: "This GPT is designed to teach financial modelling, accounting standards, and market analysis in a structured, clear, and engaging manner."

## Step 3 - Provide Clear Instructions

Again, in the 'Create' section, add detailed instructions for how your GPT should behave.

Example: "Explain financial concepts step-by-step, offer examples, and suggest exercises for learning. Provide concise definitions for accounting terms and deliver actionable insights for market analysis scenarios."

Load up any previous examples of examples you are able to share. Tell it a bit about your context "This is the finance team of a UK based company that is a small retailer of baby clothes."

## Step 4 - Customise with Example Prompts

Now in the preview section on the right hands side, you're ready to start using it. Add prompts to guide its training.

Examples:

1. "Teach me how to build a discounted cash flow model."
2. "Explain IFRS 15 with examples."
3. "What are the key factors affecting market volatility this quarter?"
4. **Test and Refine:** Interact with your GPT by asking it a variety of questions. Refine the instructions based on its responses to ensure it meets your expectations.
5. **Save and Use:** Once satisfied, save your GPT and start using it as your personal finance coach for learning and professional growth. Share it with colleagues if desired!

How do I stay up to date or even get ahead?

# How can I speed my growth ?

Practice every  
day

- AI Apps front screen
- Consider paid versions
- Think problem, think AI

Stay up to date

- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- News / GrowCFO

Generate  
Impact

- Find the quick wins
- Demonstrate change
- Use accountability

Share your  
learning

- **Consistently talk about it**
- Organise lunch and learns
- Find engaged colleagues

# What can finance leaders do?

## Engage & Inspire

- Educate on the future
- Show what's possible
- Share a clear vision

## Empower Teams

- Give clarity on AI policy
- Provide opportunities
- Enable technology

## Provide Time for Focus

- Create a change role
- Enable time for teams
- Prioritise ruthlessly

## Reward & Recognise

- **Consistently talk about it**
- Publicly reward AI successes
- Create AI forums to share

## AI Policy

An AI policy is a formal set of guidelines, procedures, and rules that govern how AI systems are developed, implemented, and monitored. It often includes detailed protocols for ethical use, data privacy, risk management, compliance with regulatory standards and accountability measures.

### Used for:

- Enhanced Compliance and Risk Management
- Operational Consistency and Efficiency
- Trust and Transparency

## AI Manifesto

An AI manifesto is a public declaration of the principles, values, and aspirations regarding the role and potential of AI within an organization or society. It is less about detailed rules and more about a vision or set of beliefs that guide innovation and cultural shifts.

### Used for:

- Driving Innovation and Transformation
- Guiding Strategic Decisions
- Inspiring and Aligning Teams

We need both!

# What's coming next for AI and Finance?

## Agentic AI in Finance

- Agentic AI refers to AI systems capable of taking initiative and executing tasks autonomously based on high-level instructions. This could accelerate workflows, reduce manual intervention, and enable new levels of productivity.

## AI Chatbots for Finance

- AI chatbots tailored for finance would act as domain-specific assistants, empowering teams to access insights, automate workflows, and manage routine queries efficiently.

## Examples of Practical Applications

- **Agentic AI:** "Find inefficiencies in our expense claim workflow and implement automated approvals for low-value claims under £500."
- **Finance Chatbot:** "Summarize this month's cash flow variance and explain why expenses increased compared to the forecast."

# Agentic AI: Bounded vs Open

## Bounded Agent

E.g. Microsoft Copilot Studio

- Works within **defined parameters** and never goes outside the lines
- Like having a **well-trained, but junior, office worker**: it knows exactly what it can and can't do, and sticks to the script

## Open Agent

E.g. OpenAI Operator

- Will attempt to **do anything** in the systems it can interact with
- Like having **an eager intern** who can figure out any task – but only after doing it wrong a few times

# Next steps

- What will we do in the next 90 days to make progress?
- What would success look like for us?
- What outcomes would we like to see?