The Global Finance Outlook:

Are Finance Teams Equipped for Today's Economy?

A research survey sponsored by Tipalti

INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic global economy, businesses are finding new paths for growth and resilience. Whether they're scaling operations within a single country, broadening their international engagements, or actively expanding across new borders, these companies share a common drive to diversify revenue streams and build robust, agile operations. However, today's organizations face a complex landscape characterized by economic uncertainty, shifting tariffs, and ever-evolving regulatory and compliance changes—all accelerated by the rapid pace of technological innovation and AI.

All of this change presents significant challenges, especially for finance teams. Regardless of an organization's specific path, core finance workflows, like vendor onboarding, invoice processing, and global compliance, become increasingly intricate and complex as companies scale.

The stakes are higher than ever, with geopolitical shifts and increased regulatory scrutiny demanding precision and agility.

AP automation and artificial intelligence have emerged as life preservers for struggling teams, **but 100% adoption is far from being realized.**

To understand the current state of AP automation adoption, Tipalti partnered with Kickstand to survey over 2,300 full-time finance professionals across the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Europe. We found that **only 1 in 4 finance professionals feels their team is "very prepared" to use their current AP processes to manage finances amid rising international expansion.**

And with 56% agreeing their current AP systems can't support long-term growth without significant upgrades, jumpstarting adoption is an urgent need.

GLOBAL COMPLEXITY IS HERE, AND FINANCE TEAMS ARE FEELING THE STRAIN

More than a third (35%) of respondents said their business priorities are becoming increasingly global in scope, with plans to expand in the next 12–24 months.

But operating in more jurisdictions means more work: **83% noted they've seen an increase in their workload,** and 79% have felt increased team expectations in the past 12 months. 55% told Tipalti their role now requires more cross-border collaboration than last year, and another 55% have spent more time focused on international business this year than those prior.

As pressure mounts **(74% say their finance team has been asked to play a more strategic role in driving business growth),** common woes arise.

Finance teams are struggling to:

34%
Manage challenges created by the pace of their scaling business

30%
Handle leadership pressures for more decision-making data

22%
Keep up with shifting policy and global economic changes

Unsurprisingly, the majority (**80%**) agree they need to scale their AP processes to keep up with growing invoice volumes.

Tariff troubles

Navigating tariffs has proven itself a growing struggle for financial teams, no matter where they're located. 59% agree that US-related tariffs are affecting their company's international expansion plans, with finance being a particular sticking point: around three in ten (31%) told us that financial planning has already been influenced by tariffs, with another 29% expecting impacts within the calendar year. *Note: those at mid-market companies were 29% more likely than SMBs to say this.*

Tariffs are making global finance a greater challenge than ever. In fact, **61% have slowed investment or growth altogether due to tariff uncertainty.** These shifts are creating operational pressure and disrupting business momentum.

Additionally, 63% noted they're finding currency management and foreign exchange fluctuations to be difficult. As a result, one in four say their team's biggest challenge is managing the complexity of finances as their company scales and expands internationally.

Tariff impacts:

34%

Economic/governmental policy changes have added volatility to financial forecasts

23%

Global/governmental shifts have triggered burnout

"The complexity of managing compliance and regulatory requirements across multiple countries keeps me up at night."

— CFO, Financial Services industry

MANUAL PROCESSES: THE SILENT KILLER OF GLOBAL AMBITIONS

Scaling a business is already exceedingly complex for financial teams. Throw in outdated processes, and it becomes even more difficult.

Two in three (66%) said they've seen an increase in manual work across the finance team in the past 12 months. With **nearly half (42%) of companies relying on mostly manual AP workflows** despite rising workloads, there's a clear disparity between how teams approach accounts payable.

Inefficient workflows are wasting hours and holding back strategy

Finance professionals spend an average of **11 hours per week on manual AP tasks** like approvals, error resolution, and reconciliation, adding up to nearly 72 work days a year spent on low-value tasks.

What's slowing them down?

36%
Resolving errors

28%
Communication gaps between departments

26%
Chasing invoice approvals

> "Ensuring accuracy and efficiency while managing increasing financial transactions worry me the most."
>
> **— CEO, Information Technology industry**

Manual processes aren't just frustrating; they're bad for business. Inefficiencies here often lead to errors in team deliverables (24%) and compliance or risk issues (24%).

ERRORS ABOUND

Employees at mid-market companies were **27%** more likely than those at SMBs to say inefficient AP processes led to errors in team deliverables, and **39%** more likely to report compliance or risk issues.

COMPLIANCE RISKS AT A RECORD HIGH

As companies navigate international expansion, tariffs, and shifting regulatory requirements, their compliance risks increase exponentially. Half say they lack a clear roadmap for managing global compliance as they scale.

43% say they've had more compliance issues and/or errors in the past year than ever before, and shifting requirements make it difficult to:

72%
Keep up with evolving international tax regulations

62%
Make forward-looking finance decisions

68%
Manage global suppliers*

*31% of respondents said ensuring compliance with supplier policies, tax requirements, and standards is their team's biggest supplier management challenge. Mid-market employees were 41% more likely than SMBs to say this.

Fraud

As if compliance worries weren't enough, 3 in 5 agree that fraud is a growing concern across their AP processes, and 1 in 4 feel it's becoming more difficult than ever to manage fraud's impact on AP work. Mid-market employees were 48% more likely than SMBs to say this.

All of this is prompting 68% of teams to reconsider how they manage AP altogether. And they're taking intentional steps to strengthen their defenses:

- **51%** have invested in technology to improve control and compliance
  Note: Mid-market employees were 53% more likely than SMBs to say this.
- **43%** have created new internal compliance protocols
  Note: Mid-market employees were 28% more likely than SMBs to say this.
- **33%** have increased staffing or added compliance-focused roles

DEMYSTIFYING AP AUTOMATION

Across every industry, AP automation is making a much-needed difference for struggling finance teams. When routine, time-intensive tasks are automated, it reduces the burden on employees and (when done right) improves accuracy. 80% therefore find that the value of automation goes beyond efficiency to support long-term business goals.

But shockingly, **only 7% of financial professionals surveyed told Tipalti they have fully automated their AP operations.**

For most teams, automation efforts are partial, with their current automation focusing on:

71%
The invoice-to-payment process

70%
OCR and invoice digitization

Even among partially automated teams, manual work continues to cause delays and inefficiencies, with 64% worried that a lack of AP automation will limit their company's ability to scale.

With growth, reputation, and competitive edge at stake, why aren't financial teams prioritizing full adoption?

Per our respondents, their biggest barriers are:

33%
Data security concerns

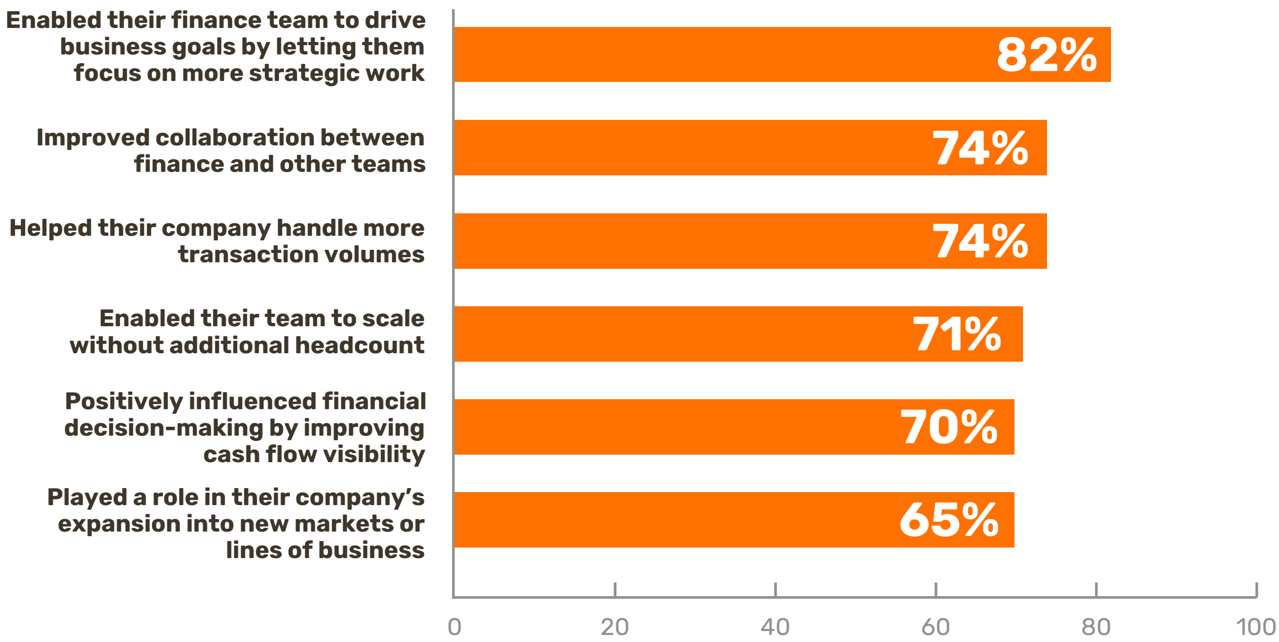
30%
Difficulty integrating with existing systems

29%
Accuracy concerns of automated tools

The impact of automation

Whether adopted fully or only partially, the improvements introduced by automation are too significant to ignore.

For teams that have embraced the technology already, AP automation has:



FULL AUTOMATION IS A FORCE MULTIPLIER

While teams that have fully automated their AP processes are in the minority, they're reaping a wealth of benefits and improved functionality in the following areas:

- Automated payment execution for invoices (40%)
- Electronic approval routing for payments (40%)
- AI-powered automation broadly across AP operations (36%)
- Regulatory compliance (32%)
- Tax compliance (32%)
- Global cross-border payment capabilities (31%)

AI in AP

Artificial intelligence is currently dominating headlines and software budgets alike. But for finance professionals, adoption rates aren't as strong as they could be, with less than half (46%) of teams beginning to implement or pilot AI tools. *Note: Those at mid-market companies were 32% more likely than SMBs to say this.*

Despite the slower uptake, AI is regarded as a force for smarter work and stronger teams in a global economy: **77% see AI and automation as essential for more strategic finance work,** and 73% say it improves retention of skilled employees. *Note: Those at mid-market companies were 24% more likely than SMBs to say this.*

When asked where AI could create the most value in the finance function, our respondents indicated the most pressing items include:

- **40%** Improved financial reporting
- **37%** Invoice processing
- **31%** Fraud detection or risk monitoring
- **31%** Budgeting and planning
- **30%** Payment reconciliation

And the results show improvements in areas where AP needs it the most, with AI-enabled teams seeing:

- **44%** Improved time savings
- **34%** Cost savings
- **32%** Faster overall finance or AP operations

As such, investment in **AI was listed as the #1 most critical investment for the future of AP.**

> “Making sure we not only spend the budget to make changes, but that everyone is trained well to implement the new technology keeps me up at night.”
>
> **— Finance Director, Financial Services industry**

FUTURE INVESTMENT PRIORITIES, AND HOW TIPALTI FITS IN

So, what does all of this mean for the future of AP? In addition to AI investment, respondents listed the following as their top priorities.

Top priorities:

50%	44%	44%	41%
Artificial intelligence	Fraud detection and risk monitoring capabilities	Data security and privacy capabilities	Financial compliance and audit capabilities

Financial pros believe that investing in the future of AP will result in greater efficiency of AP processes (42%), less manual work for finance teams (38%), and having a better ability to scale the business (32%).

With **64% saying they have an AP modernization plan in place** for the next 12 months, the time for decision makers to act is now.

Whether you're expanding internationally or simply trying to improve operations at home, your finance team deserves access to tools that help them take AP from manual to meaningful. By eliminating manual inefficiencies, reducing compliance risks, and giving your team the freedom to focus on strategic initiatives, you can transform finance from a back-office function into a true driver of business growth.

The Tipalti difference

This is where Tipalti comes in. Tipalti's AI-powered platform for finance automation provides a comprehensive suite of finance automation solutions designed for mid-market businesses across accounts payable, global payouts, procurement, employee expenses, corporate cards, supplier management, tax compliance, and treasury, so businesses can scale faster and smarter.

Tipalti helps businesses by removing the complexities of doing global business and accelerating their finance operations efficiency. **Your finance team shouldn't just "keep up" with the demands of the global economy; they should thrive in it.** If you're ready to reduce risk, unlock efficiency, and future-proof your operations, contact Tipalti today to learn how we can help.

UNLOCK EFFICIENCY TODAY

ABOUT TIPALTI

Tipalti is the AI-powered platform for finance automation, elevating how finance teams operate in the global economy. We empower our customers to scale faster and smarter by removing the complexities of doing global business and accelerating their finance operations efficiency. Our platform provides a comprehensive suite of finance automation solutions designed for mid-market businesses across accounts payable, global payouts, procurement, employee expenses, corporate cards, supplier management, tax compliance, and treasury. Tipalti partners with leading financial institutions such as Citi, Wells Fargo, J.P. Morgan, and Visa, enabling over 5,000 global companies to efficiently and securely pay millions of suppliers and payees across 200+ countries and territories, in 120 currencies. For more information, visit tipalti.com

ABOUT KICKSTAND

Kickstand is a global marketing agency specializing in support of high growth technology brands. Offering a data first approach to PR and services that include media and analyst relations, research, content, crisis communications, and influencer marketing, Kickstand helps build well-defended market leaders in some of today's most innovative industries including mobility, robotics, AI, cybersecurity, fintech, insurtech, supply chain and logistics, sales and marketing tech, and eCommerce. For more information about our approach and how we help brands scale and successfully exit, www.meetkickstand.com

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

The Global Finance Outlook survey was conducted between July 10 and August 1, 2025. Kickstand surveyed a total of 2,326 full-time finance professionals — across titles and roles covering the breadth of the function — at companies with at least 20 employees in Canada, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The study was conducted at 95% confidence with a +/- 4% margin of error.