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ACCOUNTING & AUDIT

Why CFOs Need a Financial Tech Stack

While we've changed and adapted our tech stack to fit our stage of business growth and our needs, we've found that having a tech stack is essential to businesses of any size.

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By Lukas Wagner.

It wasn't that long ago that finances were managed on paper, no matter the size of the company. When ledgers and journals were replaced by Excel sheets and Powerpoint decks, we thought we'd finally arrived. But technology has rapidly changed the way CFOs work and even *what* we work on. As CFO of a tech company, I've had courtside seats to watch this shift take place, and I believe it can be a massive advantage to those who lean into it.

What do CFOs actually do?

While this is one of those questions you may get from your mother or a dinner guest who doesn't quite know how your job works, in many cases, the answer is "everything!" When I first joined my current team, coming from one unicorn startup to another, I was the second hire outside of the founders. As a one-man finance team (VP of finance at the time), I did the books and filed business licenses in dozens of states, along with engaging investors and managing our financial strategy.

The size and complexity of your business will have a big impact on just how much you have on your plate. There's a lot that can fall on the CFO, but the priority—the thing you can do that no one else can—is steering the financial ship. Imagine guiding the ship then running back and forth to trim the sails and manage every step of the process alone. Sure, you hear about those courageous solo sailing trips around the world from time to time, but they're exhausting and strenuous, and the ships are often not very big. You can only do so much alone.

I'm no longer a one-man band, but as the valuation and impact of our company have grown exponentially, our finance team is still just a handful of people. Because we're in the finance space, we have risk and capital markets teams, but our internal finance team is still lean. That's possible because we've put a financial tech stack in place to help everyone stay focused and efficient.

Stacking the deck in your favor

Like any CFO, I love a good financial metric. One that we keep a close eye on is revenue per employee. As a small team, we're always making sure we stay productive and efficient.

It's easy to think only huge enterprises need a tech stack, but the right tools can help a small team perform like a big one or a big team stay connected and effective. Whether you have a large or small finance team, the right tech stack will help you accomplish more and also make it easier for everyone on the team to collaborate.

Our tech stack includes tools like Ramp for expense cards and payables, Modern Treasury for money movements, Mosaic for FP&A, and our core accounting platform. While we've changed and adapted our tech stack to fit our stage of business growth and our needs, we've found that *having* a tech stack is essential to businesses of any size.

For the new business, the right tools make it possible to manage your finances well with just a handful of people (even one or two can be enough). By streamlining the manual work, your tech can free you up to focus on the growing business, connect with early investors, and ensure your unit economics make sense and you reach product/market fit as quickly as possible.

As the business scales, your tech stack enables you to run efficiently without overhiring. It also makes it much easier to collaborate with your team, especially if they're distributed geographically. Think closing the books without manually running down each step or easily sharing financials with stakeholders without wondering if you're looking at the most up-to-date version. The number of emails and check-ins you can cut from your day alone can be worth the investment.

The real beauty here is the scalability of technology. It allows you to grow on your terms and at your pace while filling in whatever gaps you have at each growth stage. You get the best returns on your human resources and operate much more efficiently.

The new CFO

With the right tools in place, what's the new CFO to do with all that free time? What we were supposed to be doing all along! We get our time and focus back to guide the ship. In today's market we don't have the luxury of being less than fully focused on the bigger picture.

The new CFO has access to more and more accurate data in real time, can collaborate more seamlessly with his or her finance team, and spends less time crunching numbers so they can spend more on strategy and relationships. And as the world gets more complicated and business gets more competitive, we're going to need that focus to keep growing companies that not only hold the pace but pull ahead.

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The second hire and CFO at [Pipe](#), Lukas Wagner oversees finance and risk operations, including asset ratings, unit economics and financial planning. Prior to Pipe, Lukas was the Director of Finance at Fair, the car subscription app, where he was a member

of the fundraising team and helped raise over \$500 million dollars. Lukas is a driven finance professional, with a passion for turning great ideas into reality and making financial services easy and fair for everyone.

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