

Special Report: Meeting the Demands of Today's CFO

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We all know that the scope of responsibility and the level of accountability for CFOs are much greater than ever before.

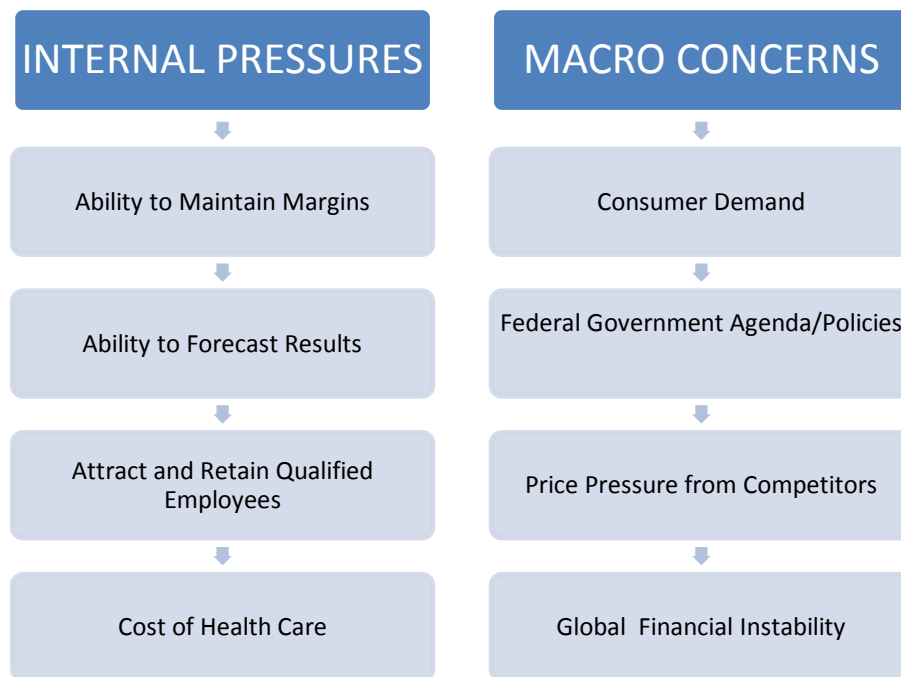
An Accenture study of the expanded role of the CFO¹, results of which were released in 2011, found that senior finance executives are frequently involved in a much broader range of corporate activities. The chart below shows specific areas of new responsibility that surveyed CFOs indicated they had taken on in the past 18 months.



Source: Accenture survey of 1,054 senior executives; multiple responses were allowed

Of the 1,054 senior financial executives surveyed, 79% said they also need more operational flexibility to be able to react quickly to sudden and ongoing market changes.

The study went on to identify key areas in which these executives are feeling the greatest pressure.



For years, financial executives managed through long periods of rapid growth. Now, in a time of slower growth, finance chiefs must think more creatively about how to enhance shareholder value, says Jeff Kotzen, a senior partner at Boston Consulting Group, New York. In a *Wall Street Journal* article², Kotzen noted that such creative thinking requires more emphasis on cost reduction, pricing and managing capital structure to build profitable growth. "The attention

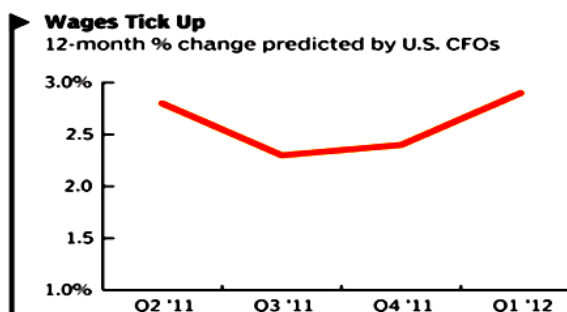
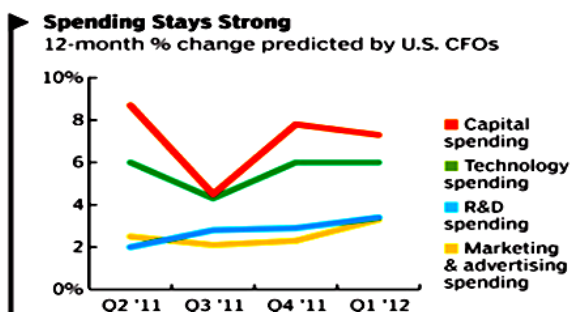
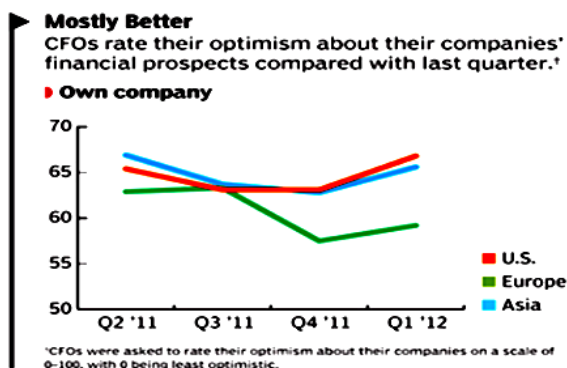
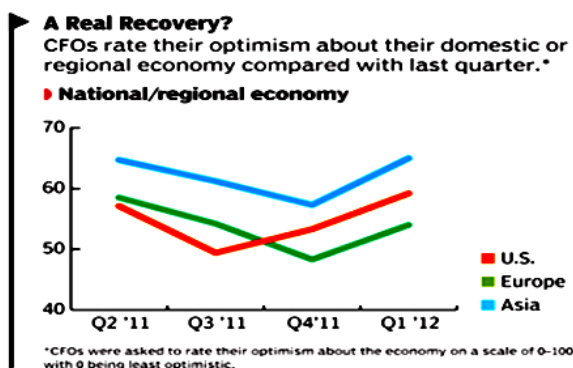
being paid to financial health and strength of businesses is greater than I've seen in 20 years," Kotzen says.

Because of their increased accountability for bottom-line results, CFOs today are much more involved in buying decisions. And while spending has been scaled back over the past several quarters, Deloitte's [CFO Insights](#) reports that during the first quarter of 2012 there was renewed interest among CFOs in corporate investing.

Duke University's first quarter 2012 "Business Outlook Survey," supports this finding. During the first quarter of 2012 some 60% of U.S. CFOs were optimistic about the economic outlook in the U.S. compared to less than 50% of those surveyed during the third quarter of 2011. The same CFOs were also slightly more optimistic about their own companies' business prospects. Surveyed CFOs estimated that wages will increase by slightly less than 3% over the next 12 months.

Finally, CFOs predicted that spending would remain strong over the coming year. Capital spending will lead the way, increasing almost 8% over the next 12 months, followed by technology (up 6%), research and development (up 3%) and marketing and advertising (also up 3%).

DUKE UNIVERSITY/CFO MAGAZINE GLOBAL BUSINESS OUTLOOK SURVEY, Q1 2012



So how do today's CFOs determine the banks and other service vendors with whom they will do business? That, of course, depends a lot on the practices of the candidate banks and vendors. In a recent CFO Publishing webinar, rules of engagement were suggested for Sales and Marketing representatives when communicating with corporate CFOs:

- ✓ **Demonstrate your credibility and experience in your industry.** One way to develop such credibility is to share case studies that show how your bank can help the CFO resolve business challenges.
- ✓ **Provide a cost/benefit analysis** for mission critical investments required to implement a new strategy or service.
- ✓ **Provide a total cost of ownership** for your business solution **as well as hard cost savings.**
- ✓ **Be clear about risks** involved in implementing a business solution.
- ✓ **Speak the business language of your trading partner,** not your own. Present your case totally from the perspective of the corporate financial manager.
- ✓ **Be concise** in communications.
- ✓ **Stick to the facts.** Don't waste your prospect's time with flashy graphics, bank ads and other forms of promotional content.

In summary, CFOs get involved with banks and other vendors when a corporate investment is mission critical, when such an investment can critically impact multiple departments, and especially when an investment directly impacts the company's ability to serve its customers.

So now we know the chief concerns facing today's financial professionals. We know what they do and don't want from you as their financial partner in addressing these concerns. With this understanding in mind, as a bank marketer you can now begin building a solid content-marketing framework that generates the kind of compelling, solutions-oriented content that is valued by CFOs and other corporate financial executives.

The Content Marketing Institute has suggested guidelines for developing best-in-class content specifically designed to engage this market niche, including the following³:

Enable self-guided research. To attract and keep the attention of financial executives, it is critical to have quality content available online to enable self-guided research by corporate financial managers.

Provide content focused on each step in the buying cycle. Content should address beginning issues like reviewing the status of a current bank service up through considerations when making a final decision to purchase a new bank service.

Deliver content that diagnoses, illuminates and resolves business challenges. Typically, financial executives initially seek content to help them diagnose and illuminate business challenges they face. They then look for content that outlines solutions they can apply to resolve these challenges.

Offer benchmarking tools. CFOs like to benchmark how their financials compare to peers using tools such as key performance indicators (KPIs) and capability/maturity comparisons.

Empower measurement of quantifiable results. More than 90% of corporations require *quantifiable* proof of the bottom-line benefits of bank services. CFOs seek content to help them understand the benefits and bottom-line impact of proposed bank solutions, especially in the middle segments of the buying cycle. And more than 81% expect the financial institution to develop and deliver a business case for adopting a proposed banking solution.

Compare results, reduce cost of solution ownership. Later in the buying lifecycle, financial pros seek content to help quantify the lower total cost of ownership of the solution and compare the value of alternate solutions.

Analyze risks and highlight competitive advantage of your solution. Corporate financial executives seek content that enables them to evaluate the relative risks of a business solution as well as competitive advantages of one solution over alternatives. Being able to cite significant competitive advantages of a solution is essential for winning final approval of your bank service.

Understand at what stage a corporation stands in the buying cycle and provide personalized communications for precisely that stage. Bank marketing and sales reps need to provide one-to-one personalized communications and insights that can help busy corporate financial executives quickly understand how your bank solution will help drive bottom-line improvements.

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Deliver content that is economically insightful and which helps the diagnostic process.

Financial executives are different than other stakeholders. Because of their wide-ranging responsibilities they need content that is more insightful and which facilitates diagnosis of the business challenge at hand.

Click on the link below to view a case study that illustrates how Cartesis, a provider of business performance software to large corporations, utilized these content guidelines to grow its database of CFOs and other senior financial managers from zero to more than 5,000 opt-in subscribers. As a result of its list-building strategy, Cartesis is now generating more than 100 new leads per month (<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article.php?contentID=2828>).

¹ “Accenture Survey Finds Scope of Responsibilities Expanding for CFOs,” Jan. 31, 2011 release, <http://newsroom.accenture.com>

² “Finance Chiefs Expand Roles,” *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 31, 2011

³ “Is Your Content Ready for the CFO?,” www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/2011/02/cfo-content/

About the Publisher

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