CONNECTING FINANCE, OPERATIONS & SUPPLY CHAIN:

A CFO’s Guide

Why Connected Data Has Become A CFO Priority

The role of the CFO has changed dramatically. Once viewed primarily as the custodian of financial reporting and compliance, today's finance leaders are expected to play a far broader role in shaping business strategy, supporting growth, improving resilience and driving operational performance.

Supply chain disruption, inflationary pressures, changing customer demand and ongoing economic uncertainty have highlighted the limitations of traditional reporting and planning processes.

This guide explores why connected data has become a strategic priority for CFOs and how a more integrated approach can improve decision-making across the entire organisation.

01

The Hidden Cost of Silos

Disconnected systems and fragmented data across finance, operations and supply chain

02

The CFO as Connector

Finance leaders bridging functions to align strategy and performance

03

Five Data Domains

Critical categories every CFO should monitor and connect

04

Visibility as Advantage

Connected data as a competitive differentiator in a complex environment

AKITA
Intelligent Solutions

The Hidden Cost Of Business Silos

Most organisations have invested heavily in technology over the years. Finance has accounting and reporting systems. Operations has production, service management or project management tools. Procurement and supply chain teams often use separate purchasing and inventory platforms. The result is a growing collection of systems that do not always communicate effectively.

While each department may be capable of producing detailed reports, combining these insights into a single view of business performance can be surprisingly difficult. This creates several compounding challenges. Finance may identify declining profitability but struggle to understand the operational factors driving it. Operations teams may experience capacity constraints without fully appreciating the impact on revenue and cash flow. Supply chain teams may increase inventory levels to improve service delivery while unknowingly creating pressure on working capital.

When information remains trapped within functional silos, decision-making becomes slower and less effective. Teams spend valuable time gathering data, reconciling reports and debating which figures are correct rather than focusing on action.

Slow Management Reports

Reports take weeks to produce, reducing their relevance and timeliness for decision-making.

Unreliable Forecasts

Disconnected data makes forecasts less accurate and planning less effective.

Excess Inventory

Without shared visibility, inventory levels increase unnecessarily, tying up working capital.

Reactive Management

Leaders spend time explaining what has already happened rather than predicting what might happen next.

As businesses grow, these challenges become even more pronounced. Additional locations, suppliers, product lines and reporting requirements increase complexity and further reduce visibility.

Financial reports remain essential, but by themselves they provide only part of the story — they tell organisations where they have been, not what operational decisions, supply chain dynamics and market conditions created those results. Connected data changes that.

The CFO As A Connector Of The Business

Strategic Leadership

Board members, senior leadership teams and shareholders now look to finance leaders to provide strategic insight, support business planning and help guide organisational priorities — requiring a much broader understanding of the business than traditional finance management alone.

Cross-Functional Partnership

The most effective CFOs recognise that revenue growth, margin improvement and cash flow optimisation cannot be achieved through finance initiatives alone. They require collaboration across multiple functions — from procurement and supply chain to sales and operations.

Shared Alignment

Finance leaders are becoming business partners rather than simply financial stewards — participating in demand planning discussions, supply chain reviews, resource planning meetings and strategic growth initiatives to create alignment across the organisation.

The CFO is uniquely positioned to connect different functions across the organisation.

Finance has visibility into profitability, cash flow and investment priorities. Operations understands capacity, productivity and resource utilisation. Procurement and supply chain teams monitor suppliers, inventory and fulfilment performance. Sales teams provide valuable insight into customer demand and future growth opportunities.

A connected organisation ensures everyone is working toward common objectives, supported by shared data and consistent metrics — creating stronger decision-making, greater accountability and a better understanding of the trade-offs required to achieve long-term business goals.

Understanding The Link Between Operations And Financial Performance

Every financial outcome has an operational cause.

This may seem obvious, but many organisations continue to analyse financial performance separately from the activities that produce it. Revenue is influenced by customer demand, production capacity, delivery performance and service quality. Profitability depends on procurement decisions, operational efficiency, inventory management and resource utilisation.

Cash flow is shaped by payment terms, inventory levels, supplier relationships and fulfilment processes.

Operational Activity	Financial Impact
Inventory levels	Working capital
Supplier performance	Cash flow
Procurement costs	Gross margin
Production efficiency	Profitability
Resource utilisation	Operating costs
Customer fulfilment	Revenue
Demand forecasting	Planning accuracy
Lead times	Inventory investment

Consider inventory management. Excess inventory may improve service availability, but it also ties up cash that could otherwise support investment or growth initiatives. Conversely, insufficient inventory may reduce working capital requirements while creating fulfilment challenges and lost sales opportunities. Both operational and financial perspectives are required to determine the appropriate balance.

Without connected data, these relationships often remain hidden until after financial results have been reported. With connected data, businesses can identify trends earlier and respond more effectively. For CFOs, the objective is not simply better reporting — it is establishing a clearer understanding of how operational activity translates into financial performance and how future decisions may influence business outcomes.

The 5 Data Domains Every CFO Should Monitor

While every organisation is different, there are five critical categories of information that finance leaders should monitor and connect. Viewed independently, each provides only a partial perspective.

Viewed together, they create a far richer understanding of how the business operates and where improvements can be achieved.

Financial Data

Revenue, costs, profitability, working capital and cash flow. The foundation of business management — but financial data alone reveals symptoms rather than root causes.

Operational Data

Capacity utilisation, productivity, project delivery, service performance and resource management — all directly influencing financial outcomes and growth potential.

Supply Chain Data

Inventory levels, supplier performance, lead times and fulfilment metrics — all influencing customer satisfaction, cost management and cash flow.

Procurement & Spend

Supplier spend, purchasing patterns and contract performance. Greater spend transparency uncovers cost savings, improves supplier management and reduces unnecessary expenditure.

Forecasting & Planning

Sales forecasts, demand projections, production plans and financial forecasts — helping organisations anticipate future requirements and respond proactively.

AKITA
Intelligent Solutions

From Historical Reporting To Driver-Based Planning

Traditional Reporting

Inherently backward-looking — explaining what happened last month, last quarter or last year. While important, it relies solely on historical financial trends and past performance, which does not always predict future conditions.

The Risk

Markets change rapidly. Customer demand fluctuates. Supply chain disruptions occur unexpectedly. Relying solely on historic performance creates significant strategic risk.

Driver-Based Planning

Focuses on the operational factors that create financial outcomes. Projected revenue is influenced by sales pipeline activity, production capacity and customer demand trends. Labour costs are driven by resource requirements and workload forecasts. Inventory investment is determined by demand forecasts, supplier lead times and service level targets.

Key Questions It Answers

- What happens if demand increases by 20%?
- How will a supplier delay affect cash flow?
- What inventory levels will be required to support growth?
- How will rising procurement costs impact margins?
- Can operational capacity support projected sales volumes?

Connected data enables organisations to move towards predictive planning. Real-time information can highlight emerging trends before they appear in financial reports. Forecasts can be updated more frequently and scenario planning becomes more practical, allowing organisations to evaluate multiple outcomes and prepare accordingly.

Perhaps most importantly, connected planning encourages collaboration — finance, operations and supply chain teams work from a shared understanding of business drivers rather than competing forecasts and assumptions. The result is better alignment, stronger forecasting and more confident decision-making.

What High-Performing Organisations Do Differently

High-performing organisations often share several common characteristics. While their industries, products and business models may differ significantly, their approach to information management is remarkably similar.

Importantly, these organisations do not view connected data as an IT initiative — they view it as a business capability that supports growth, profitability and resilience.

1 Establish a Single Source of Truth

Rather than relying on multiple disconnected reports, they create consistent data definitions and shared performance metrics across the entire business.

2 Align Goals Between Departments

Finance, operations and supply chain teams understand how their activities contribute to overall business objectives and use common measures of success.

3 Standardise Reporting Processes

This reduces time spent gathering information and increases confidence in decision-making across the organisation.

4 Prioritise Visibility and Reduce Manual Processes

Leaders access relevant information quickly. Dependence on spreadsheets and manual reporting is reduced — minimising risk, duplication and inconsistency.

5 Embrace Automation

Automated data collection and reporting improves efficiency while providing more timely insights to support faster, better-informed decisions.

AKITA
Intelligent Solutions

Building The Technology Foundation For Connected Data

Achieving connected visibility requires the right technology foundation. Historically, organisations often relied on separate finance, operational and supply chain systems with limited integration between them. Today, modern business platforms are designed to support a more connected approach.

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, cloud-based business applications, business intelligence tools and workflow automation technologies help organisations bring together information from across multiple functions.

The objective is not simply to centralise data. It is to create a connected environment where information can be shared, analysed and used to support better decision-making. Modern ERP platforms play a particularly important role because they sit at the heart of business operations. By connecting finance, inventory, procurement, operations and reporting activities, organisations can create a more complete view of performance.

ERP Systems

Platforms such as **Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central** and the wider Dynamics 365 ecosystem connect financial, operational and supply chain activities within a more integrated environment.

Business Intelligence Tools

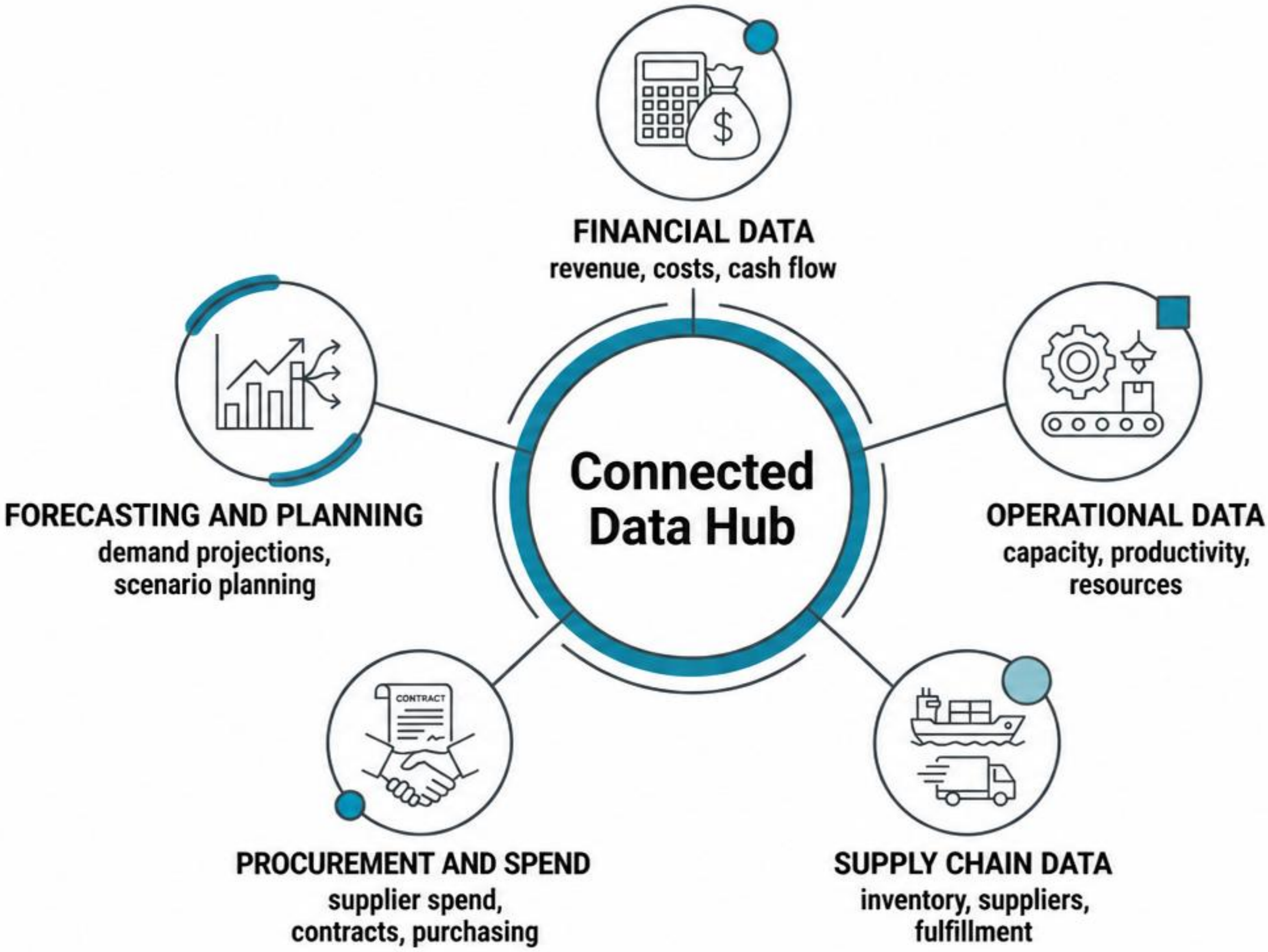
Analytics and reporting platforms transform connected data into actionable insight, enabling leaders to identify trends, monitor performance and respond proactively.

Workflow Automation

Automating data collection and routine processes reduces manual effort, improves accuracy and ensures information is available when decisions need to be made.

Technology alone will not solve every challenge. However, when combined with effective processes and strong cross-functional collaboration, it can provide the foundation for a more connected and agile organisation — delivering greater visibility, improved reporting, stronger forecasting and a more consistent view of business performance.

The Operational-Financial Connection: A Summary View



When these five domains are connected, organisations gain a holistic view of performance that no single system or report can provide alone.

Finance understands the operational causes behind financial results. Operations understands the financial consequences of capacity and resource decisions.

Supply chain and procurement teams understand how their activities influence profitability and cash flow. Planning teams can build forecasts grounded in real operational data rather than historical assumptions.

This interconnected view is the foundation of a high-performing, resilient organisation.

Visibility As A Competitive Advantage

> **The organisations that outperform competitors are rarely those with the most data. They are the organisations that connect their data, understand the relationships between financial and operational performance, and use those insights to make better decisions.**

The challenges facing today's CFOs extend far beyond traditional financial management. Organisations must respond to changing customer expectations, supply chain disruption, economic uncertainty and increasing competitive pressure.

Success requires faster decisions and a deeper understanding of how different parts of the business influence one another. Finance, operations and supply chain functions can no longer operate independently — the relationships between inventory, procurement, productivity, cash flow and profitability are too significant to ignore.

Connected data provides the visibility needed to understand these relationships and act with greater confidence. It enables stronger forecasting, better planning, improved collaboration and more informed decision-making at every level of the organisation. Most importantly, it enables finance leaders to move from **reporting performance** to **influencing performance**.

Stronger Forecasting

Real-time data enables more accurate, frequently updated forecasts grounded in operational reality.

Better Collaboration

Shared data and common metrics align finance, operations and supply chain around common goals.

Competitive Advantage

In an increasingly complex business environment, connected visibility is more than a reporting advantage — it is a strategic differentiator.

The journey towards better business performance starts with better visibility. By connecting finance, operations and supply chain data, CFOs can move beyond reporting results and begin shaping them through better planning, forecasting and decision-making.

At Akita Intelligent Solutions, we help organisations create a connected view of business performance through Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Business Central, enabling leaders to make more informed decisions with confidence. For more:

Visit: Akitais.com
Email: Info@akitais.com

AKITA
Intelligent Solutions

AKITA
Intelligent Solutions

0330 135 8042 INFO@AKITAIS.COM WWW.AKITAIS.COM