

The view from

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Tomorrow's CFOs understand the importance of technology for creating value. Regulatory changes, broader expectations of reporting, and growing volumes of crossborder trading, mergers and acquisitions all add to complexity for finance teams at a time when more and more routine accounting tasks are being automated. People with the know-how and motivation can harness IT innovation, generating business intelligence and analytics that support decision-making and ultimately create value.

To make a tangible impact, finance leaders need to extend their influence. They need to embed their role throughout the business, even if that means switching into non-finance roles. But it's about mindset as much as activity. Successful

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accountants proactively support corporate performance by understanding, anticipating and responding to the challenges faced by operational and client-facing peers and colleagues.

My own focus is on strategy and commercial development. We support group CFOs of mid to large organisations with performance management software and systems that integrate budgeting, planning, consolidation and reporting activities via a single IT platform. It's an exciting time to work in analytics, with data production and interrogation becoming more business-led and forward-thinking. I oversee every aspect of the company's Swiss business, from sales and business development to service delivery and customer satisfaction. I'm also responsible for forging partnerships with like-minded consulting and professional services firms.

I'm a strong advocate for ACCA Switzerland. Most recently, this involved hosting a successful major event on integrated reporting in Zurich, with speakers from global organisations. Actively supporting ACCA is a conscious decision for me: it enables me to step away from the daily routine and consider different perspectives. Even better, I get to network with highly motivated professionals – not just CFOs and decision-makers, but also people whose careers I might be able to help with.

Corporate life and academic life (I'm visiting professor at Edhec Business School in Lille) create unique synergies. I love sharing my practical experience and insights through teaching, whether that's with the younger generation or with CFOs, financial controllers and Big Four partners on master's programmes. I illustrate the syllabus using real-life scenarios, while the Q&A sessions are typically learning opportunities for me too. It makes for a packed schedule but I'm well organised, with a supportive family for whom I always reserve quality time. ■



Snapshot: telecoms

In global communications, consolidation is a key issue. Operators argue in favour of it because it allows greater investment in infrastructure, and governments endorse it because it facilitates improved access for consumers. However, there has been a hardening of attitudes among regulators concerned that it may lead to rising prices and more limited choice.

Another issue is data privacy and protection. How and under what circumstances customer data may be accessed or repurposed, and the measures required to protect customer data, have been widely debated. The EU's new general data protection regulation is an ambitious move to harmonise data protection measures across the EU.

In commercial terms, the sector is generally resilient in the face of economic uncertainty. However, operators are under pressure to keep pace with startup innovators, such as app developers who might make inroads into legacy revenue, something some players look to avoid by pursuing collaboration or by participating in incubators.

Finance professionals in this evolving sector need to have a flexible mindset and the ability to collaborate across departments and disciplines. The ability to bring in and work with people who have different perspectives is highly prized.

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