

Finance Trends 2026

Telecommunications, Media and Technology

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The African Telecommunications, Media and Technology (TMT) CFO: From steward to strategic architect

Embracing AI-driven insights, embedding advanced scenario planning and closing the talent gap

Deloitte's *Finance Trends 2026* report shows that the scope of finance has expanded. Today's finance leaders are playing a leading role in shaping enterprise strategy, cost optimisation, and digital transformation – and building tech fuelled teams to power their organisations.





Compared to the recent past, today's leading chief financial officers are thinking differently, operating differently, and hiring differently. But they're contending with a complex growth environment.

To help leaders gain a better understanding of what's likely to come next and inform this inaugural Finance Trends report, we surveyed 1,326 global finance leaders around the world and across industries. Respondents to our survey are CFOs or next-in-line to be CFOs at some of the world's largest companies (with annual revenues exceeding US\$1 billion). We also conducted one-on-one interviews with nine finance executives from global organisations to learn how these trends are playing out in their role and across the finance function.

In practice, this means rationalising capex under sustained FX and energy volatility, protecting cash without starving growth adjacencies (fintech, enterprise, platforms), and directing scarce digital talent toward the highest yield use cases. This is not strategy theatre; it is day to day portfolio triage, often under elevated cost of capital and evolving regulatory expectations.

CFOs are expected to protect financial returns while advancing national connectivity goals, such as rural coverage, universal service obligations, and social tariffs. This reality is reshaping capital investment decisions – away from blanket network rollouts and towards phased, micro market investments that are continually reprioritised as conditions change. Shifts in foreign exchange, spectrum availability, energy reliability, and operating costs can quickly alter the investment case. The most effective CFOs respond by sequencing capital deployment, grounded in granular unit economics and supported by clear scenario triggers (for example FX thresholds, fuel costs, or load shedding intensity), rather than relying on once a year budget decisions.

Despite the growing strategic role of finance in Africa, several systemic obstacles hinder its effectiveness. These include poor data quality, fragmented legacy systems, and major talent shortages in digital and analytical skills. As a result, finance teams often face delays and inaccuracies in reporting, which frustrates senior executives. Even though telecommunications companies may have sophisticated systems, they are frequently not fully utilised due to gaps in employee knowledge and high staff turnover.

In an uncertain environment where planning for external challenges and major business shifts is a top priority for telecommunications, media and technology (TMT) finance leaders, over half

54%

say they are playing a leading role in enterprise strategy and only

1%

say that they are not consulted at all.

In Africa, the TMT CFO's role is expanding from steward to strategic architect – not just "influencing" strategy but owning capital allocation choices that set the tempo for growth, resilience, and



Advanced scenario planning and AI-driven insights to manage uncertainty

To manage uncertainty more effectively,

30%

of TMT leaders globally said the most important tool for them was advanced scenario planning to better anticipate changing needs, while an equal amount

30%

said for them leveraging AI-driven insights to better guide decision-making, was most important.

In Africa, advanced scenario planning capability is especially important given that volatility is not episodic but structural. With scenario planning, African CFOs can model multiple macro, geo-political, regulatory and technology pathways before they materialise. However, although recognition of scenario planning as a core competency is well recognised, its adoption in African companies lags behind their global counterparts, largely because of a lack of access to skills and data.



The journey to agentic insights

70%

of finance leaders globally have fully deployed and are actively using AI within their function. Of those that have,

30%

are seeing these investments deliver clear, measurable value. However, of those that have seen value, only

19%

have fully integrated AI agents into specific areas within the finance function.

A pragmatic view on AI adoption is essential. For most African TMT finance teams, value lies not in advanced, autonomous AI use cases yet, but in steadily progressing from automation to modern analytics and then scaling AI where it directly improves decision making. Near term impact comes from applying AI to a few high value workflows – keeping forecasts current as FX and energy costs shift, flagging revenue leakage and credit risk early, improving visibility into OpEx and vendor spend, strengthening working capital management, and enabling faster, more insightful executive reporting. The true measure of success is not technical sophistication, but whether finance leaders can make better decisions sooner, with less effort spent producing numbers and more time spent acting on them.



Digital and human skills are both needed

While AI and automation skills are the top priority for TMT finance leaders

32%

globally, strategic decision-making

28%

and leadership and adaptability

26%

remain important priorities

In Africa, companies that are making intentional investments in upskilling their finance teams, through fresh talent, training programmes and exposure to emerging technologies, are seeing a direct positive impact on team engagement and performance. Conversely, organisations that neglect widespread training and rely on ad hoc development face recurring challenges and stagnation. Introducing new thinking and technologies, such as AI, can revitalise teams and drive continuous engagement.

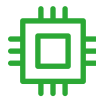
Looking ahead

Operating in environments characterised by currency volatility, regulatory fragmentation, infrastructure gaps and accelerating AI disruption, the African TMT CFO must balance short-term stability with long-term transformation. This requires dynamic capital allocation, rigorous scenario planning, and a sharp focus on translating digital and AI investments into measurable business outcomes.

The Finance Trends 2026 report points to the following key imperatives that African TMT finance leaders should take heed of:



Prioritise advanced scenario planning to improve resilience.



Pragmatically invest in **digital infrastructure AI capabilities** with clear business cases.



Strengthen talent pipelines through upskilling programs, creative partnerships and ecosystem collaborations.

Finance is no longer a back-office function. In African Telecommunications, Media and Technology, it is becoming a central driver of strategic agility, capital discipline, and sustainable value creation. While demand for connectivity and digital services continue to expand, margins remain under pressure and capital intensity is rising. Those CFOs who act decisively today, embedding advanced scenario planning, disciplined capital allocation, and rigorous digital ROI management will be best positioned to convert structural demand into ongoing competitive advantage.

For more information, contact your Deloitte partner or



Siliziwe Mafika

Africa CFO Programme Leader
smafika@deloitte.co.za



Lutho Sotashe

Deloitte Africa Technology, Media and
Telecommunications (TMT) Leader
lsotashe@deloitte.co.za

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