



Ritchy Drost has served as CFO of VodafoneZiggo since the start on 1 January 2017. From 1 May 2024—1 September 2025, he also assumed the responsibilities of interim CEO. Prior to that, he was CFO and member of the board at Ziggo since 2015. Ritchy joined Liberty Global in 1999 and fulfilled various senior finance leadership roles at Liberty Global/UPC and UPC Netherlands, following an earlier career at Arthur Andersen. He currently also serves as a member of the Supervisory Board and Chair of the Audit Committee at De Balie, and Chairman of the Supervisory Board at NEMO. Previously, he held similar (supervisory) board positions at organisations including Stichting Uitmarkt Amsterdam and Alzheimer Nederland.

## Ritchy Drost, CFO VodafoneZiggo

### “We are moving towards predictive value”

The CFO Survey Spring 2026 indicates that many Dutch CFOs are slightly less optimistic about their firms' prospects than half a year ago. However, Ritchy Drost argues that sentiment inside VodafoneZiggo has actually improved. Not because external conditions have become easier, but because the company itself is becoming more focused, more confident and is successfully translating its new strategy into tangible results. Drost: “We are not waiting for the market to improve, but building the clarity, discipline and energy required to outperform in spite of it. We are customer-focused and our mindset is to turn problems into possibilities.”

#### **Economic outlook and internal sentiment**

Macroeconomic conditions remain uncertain, customers are cautious and the Telecoms industry offers little natural growth. After all, internet penetration is mature, mobile markets are saturated and structural expansion is difficult. Hardly the ideal conditions for long-term success.

Yet despite that backdrop, the sentiment inside VodafoneZiggo has visibly improved. A year ago, a new strategy was introduced that defined what the company

wants to be, where and how it intends to compete and how it plans to create value. Since then, that strategy has been translated into action and tangible results. Commercial performance is improving, confidence is rising and the organisation is able to react to events with a coherent framework. Drost: “That combination of sharper choices and visible progress has materially changed the internal mood.”

#### **Customer growth**

Customer growth is once again the organising principle

of VodafoneZiggo. “Our new strategy is built around that idea. Success is defined as customer growth instead of simply by protecting margins or meeting financial targets while the customer base declines. In the past, we could still deliver healthy cash flow even as we lost customers. That was a strategically and culturally unsustainable situation.”

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He continues: “Employees want to work for a winning company, and customers want to buy from one. If leadership continues to explain why customer losses don’t matter, something more fundamental is wrong. We have therefore accepted a temporary reduction in EBITDA margins and operating profit in order to invest in growth and in rebuilding the top line. That means investing in our brands, propositions, commercial activities, and organisational change rather than continuing to optimise a shrinking base.”

For Drost it is clear that this is a transition rather than an end state. If customer growth returns, average revenue per customer remains resilient, and VodafoneZiggo becomes structurally more efficient, then profitability will recover on a much stronger footing. This is not a growth strategy based

on aggressive price cuts. He stresses that the aim is to win through a better offer, a stronger brand, better execution, and pricing discipline.

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#### **Six-quarter roadmap**

Much of the company’s renewed energy is linked to leadership and simplification. “Our new CEO has cut through complexity and created far greater clarity about priorities, delivery and accountability. The new approach has made execution faster, less fragmented and more predictable. It centres on a single six-quarter roadmap which is all about what we ship to customers. It connects commercial planning with technical delivery, product development and financial forecasting.”

“In order to become a true forward-looking business partner, we have redesigned the structure of the Finance team, clarified responsibilities and placed much greater emphasis on single accountability.”

The roadmap has become a practical tool for aligning teams around when products must be built and tested, when campaigns

should launch and how Finance should model the impact and allocate the budgets. It is a more disciplined and industrialised way of operating, though not a bureaucratic one, which will make delivery more dependable and easier to manage. “It’s like using Google Maps: we know where we are heading, what route we will take, where we need to be at what time, and what each stage will involve.”

This discipline is reinforced by scenario planning and by faster operating rhythms. “Instead of relying on lengthy monthly reviews packed with dozens of pages, we now focus on a smaller set of core KPIs and review them more frequently.” Weekly and even daily trading meetings keep leadership closer to events as they unfold, allowing earlier interventions when performance, spending or margins drop. The result is an increase of focus, speed, and informed decision-making.

#### **The changing role of Finance**

The changing role of Finance is another success factor. Drost describes a deliberate shift from Finance pushing for a more standardised way of performance monitoring to Finance being a true forward-looking business partner. “In order to do so, we have redesigned the structure of my team, clarified responsibilities, and placed much greater emphasis on single accountability. Rather than relying on vaguer notions of agility, the organisation now

expects people to own a given outcome, followed by broader alignment; from effort to output.”

Reporting remains important but is increasingly separated from the analytical and interpretive work that supports decision-making. That means Finance professionals can spend less time assembling figures and more time understanding what those figures mean for the business. “This makes the role more demanding but also more valuable. Finance is expected not just to model and explain, but to challenge assumptions, anticipate outcomes and engage with commercial decisions in real time.”

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### **Finance talent**

The new role of Finance also creates opportunities for Finance talent. Some roles have disappeared through simplification, while others have evolved into more commercially focused positions. “As our organisation becomes leaner, it becomes more dependent on the people who remain. A smaller workforce does not reduce the importance of talent; it actually increases it. Finance, in particular, now sits much closer to the centre of growth, predictability

and execution.”

### **Technology and AI**

When it comes to the role of technology and AI as enablers for this transformation, Drost takes a practical view. “AI is not a stand-alone solution, but part of a broader shift towards greater foresight, speed, and predictability. VodafoneZiggo initially allowed employees to experiment with a range of tools, from simple chat-based systems to predictive models, in order to build familiarity and identify useful applications. We are now becoming more selective about where investment can create real value.”

“Next to that we have a dedicated internal AI team, which is focussing on the wide landscape of AI possibilities and its use cases from generative AI, up to full autonomous AI agents which can operate withing parts of our organisation. The different waves of automating processes and reimagining processes in our organisation, will improve the quality of our work, speed up decision making and execution.”

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### **Predictive value**

“This helps to explain our commercial success. It’s a combination of a strong commercial team, the right brand proposition, the proper price

points, bold decisions, and above all, a Finance team that is fully integrated with the business. We are now moving towards predictive value. That is genuinely exciting, and people can see that it is gaining traction. Employee satisfaction is rising. We are truly on the move and pleased with where we are heading.”

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### **Summary**

In a world where macroeconomic conditions remain uncertain, customers are cautious and the Telecoms industry is saturated, the sentiment inside VodafoneZiggo has improved. CFO Ritchy Drost links much of the company’s renewed energy to leadership, simplification, a six-quarter roadmap, scenario planning, and faster operating rhythms. Finance is becoming a forward-looking commercial partner. Reporting remains important but is increasingly separated from the analytical and interpretive work that supports decision-making. AI is not a stand-alone solution, but part of a broader shift towards greater foresight, speed, and predictability. In short: VodafoneZiggo is not waiting for the market to improve, but building the clarity, discipline and energy required to outperform in spite of it.