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The Future of Finance

Azets Predicts: the trends shaping finance in 2027 and beyond

Executive Summary

The finance function will **change rapidly in 2027**.

Costs, technology and regulation are all moving at once and **finance is expected to drive the changes, not just document them**. Businesses are looking to their finance teams to empower them for growth, help them see what's around the corner, guide their AI implementation and ensure that they create the right environment to encourage the finance leaders of tomorrow.

This Future of Finance report offers an unfiltered look into the minds of 240+ business leaders, laying out their concerns for 2027, the technologies they are investing in, and the practical steps they are taking to build a resilient, forward-looking finance function.

5 Trends for 2027

Trend 1: Pushing ahead despite adversity

86% of businesses grew last year, 41% had to work harder for it, and most still plan to push on in 2027. Whether businesses are pushing growth or protecting what they have, those waiting for perfect conditions will get left behind.

57% of businesses **plan to take risks** and go after growth over the next 12 months, rather than holding back and controlling costs

Trend 2: The agility advantage

SMEs have a head start in 2027: with no legacy systems or red tape they can take advantage of technology quicker, **but only if they're agile**. 76% think growth is realistic, compared with less than half of larger firms .

76% predict **smaller businesses will outperform** their larger competitors simply because they can adopt new technology faster

Trend 3: Eyes on the horizon

Finance moves from reporting the past to seeing around corners. Real-time data will change how leaders work with finance teams and advisors. The top ask of leaders is **proactive, year-round advice**, not just compliance

90% expect to see **their financial numbers in real time** within the next three years, rather than weeks after the fact

Trend 4: The AI reality

AI finds its place in 2027, moving from threat to gifted colleague, albeit one that needs supervision.

45% of leaders say **automation was their biggest driver of value** in 2026

Trend 5: Cybersecurity is a finance issue

Already a major business risk, it's also the biggest barrier to finance automation and AI implementation: 34% name it as the top barrier, with cost (22%) a distant second.

26% of leaders point to **fraud and cyber-attacks as the biggest blind spot** their industry is currently ignoring

Leaders who enter 2027 strongest will be those who already have their eyes on tomorrow.

About Future of Finance

This Future of Finance report from Azets looks ahead to 2027 through the predictions of the people running the numbers. Azets spoke to global finance and business leaders, CFOs and industry experts on their hopes, fears and 'ones to watch' for 2027. The report is built on 241 interviews with C-suite and senior decision-makers, and the real-world experiences of industry experts and specialists within Azets.

Research was conducted in September 2026 across the UK, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.



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5 Key Trends for 2027

The 5 areas shaping the future of finance



01

KEY TREND 1:

Pushing ahead despite adversity

Conditions are tough, but confidence remains high: tech, people and hard work are the factors making the difference

Leaders will push ahead in 2027 despite tough conditions

86% of businesses grew in the last 12 months and 41% had to work much harder for it than they used to.

Leaders will operate with a renewed sense of confidence and aggressive optimism, demanding more proactive support for their ambitions.

Question: Which of these two best describes your plan for the next 12 months?

Push	**57%**	Take some risk, invest, go after growth even if conditions stay difficult
Protect	**43%**	hold on to what we have, control costs, wait for better conditions

86%

Describe themselves as **thriving** or **confident**

73%

Believe business pressure will **get worse** before it gets better

02% Only

Say they are **under real pressure** or fighting to survive

Accountants can change the world.
My entrepreneurial clients are wired differently.

The relentless optimism, risk-taking and drive to win never goes away. There's no fear of failure.

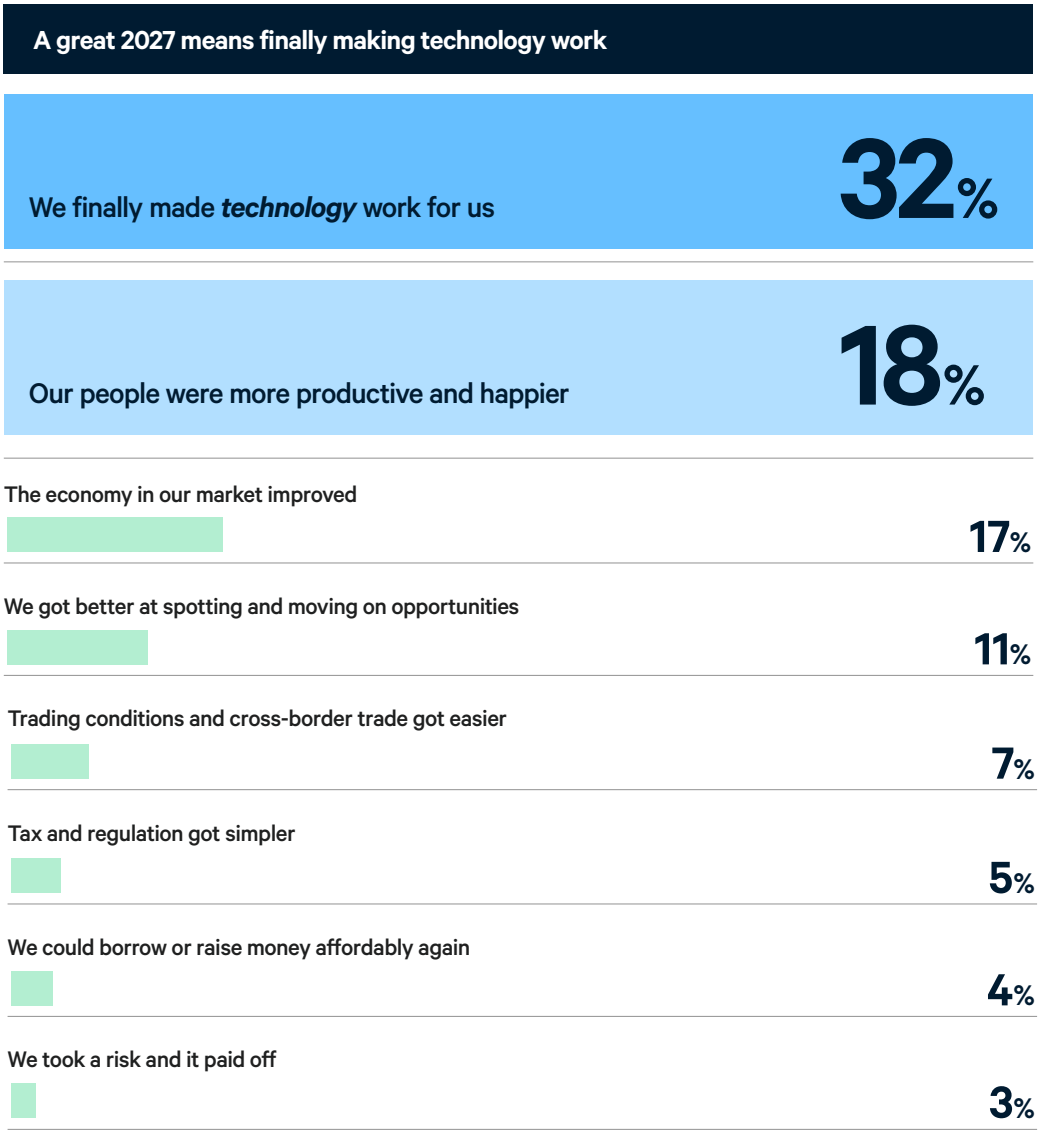
Winning is creating successful businesses — the monetary reward that comes with it is just a scorecard."

Nimesh Shah
CEO, Blick Rothenberg

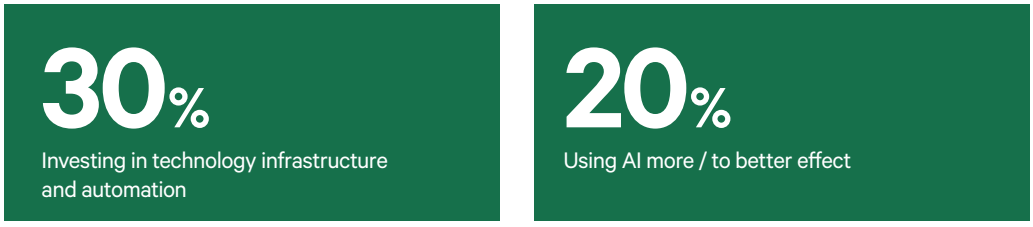
Growth in 2027 comes through operations, rather than expansion

This is growth without getting bigger: better margins from the same customers, more output from the same team, more value from systems already paid for.

Question: Now think about December 2027. Imagine your business has just had its best and least stressful year yet. What was the main reason?



Half of all growth plans run through technology



Question: Which of the following will your business rely on most to grow in the next 12 months?

Key Trend:
Pushing ahead despite adversity

Azets predicts

Those businesses waiting for perfect conditions may be left behind by those who have learnt to push on despite the turbulence.

Winners will focus on a smaller set of strategic priorities — don't try to do everything, just the actions that are actually moving the needle.

Advisory needs to step up, as ambitious businesses will want partners who will help them chase growth, not just file their taxes.



01

Success in 2027 will be about profitable growth, not growth at any cost — and the ability to turn strategic ambitions into operational result.

Kristine Vergli Grant-Carlsen
CFO Norway, Azets



02

KEY TREND 2

The agility advantage

Technology gives smaller businesses a head start, but only if it's used wisely

Moving smarter and faster will allow nimble businesses to win

Agility goals are less about expansion and more about getting the most out of what is already there.

A lack of legacy systems and red tape to negotiate becomes a superpower. Digital tools will act as a multiplier as smaller businesses can deploy new tech tools in days rather than months, as cloud infrastructure, automated compliance and digital sales channels level the playing field, allowing smaller businesses to punch above their weight. Leaders believe smaller players can out-manoeuvre and out-innovate big business.

But leaders are not predicting a good year for smaller businesses in general; they are predicting a year that separates them. The same leaders who expect smaller firms to outperform also expect a wave of acquisitions and closures.

In 2027, being small is not the advantage. **Winning relies on agility, speed and resilience.**

76%

Smaller firms will **outperform** through faster tech adoption

81%

Businesses will profitably serve **niche markets**

82%

Smaller firms in their industry will be **acquired or closed**

"The mid-market businesses that are winning have moved up the value chain. It's no longer good enough to just do more of the same. The cost pressures are so much more than they've ever been before. **They've had to find ways to pivot their businesses to make sure margins still stay the same."**

Nimesh Shah
CEO, Blick Rothenberg

Smaller businesses see the year ahead differently from larger firms. They believe they can grow.

76% **smaller businesses** say growth is a realistic goal for the next 12 months

44% **larger businesses** say growth is a realistic goal

Smaller businesses defined as fewer than 250 employees

They are less likely (42%) than bigger businesses to think their business would function well with fewer people in it. Smaller teams are already lean, and every role counts.



> **European SMEs don't simply need more technology; they need *more capacity.***
>
> The real promise of AI is to give a small business access to capabilities that previously required a much bigger organisation. But that won't happen simply by buying the tools. It comes from educating people, practising with AI and redesigning the way work gets done."
>
> **Dawn Marriott**
> Serial Executive Chair, Hg

KEY TREND

The agility advantage

Azets predicts

Agile SMEs have the opportunity to steal share from larger enterprises; if they can deploy tech smartly

Lean into your size: SMEs can test-drive AI customer service or automated supply chain tools before bigger competitors have started the approval process. Larger firms are less vulnerable and have more scale if they can get moving quickly

Winners will be those who look 'right to left' by picturing the disruptor that could cause you issues down the line and adopting their tech strategy today.



02

> People drive for pace because of a fear of either being left behind or wanting to lead the market. But finance's role remains an important one; there is a dynamic where **pace and proof need to be balanced carefully.**"

Neil Martin
Group CFO, Azets



03

KEY TREND 3

Eyes on the horizon

Moving from month-end bookkeeping to real-time data and predictive intelligence will fundamentally shape the role of finance leaders and advisors

The arrival of predictive intelligence

Where finance decisions used to be based on month-old data and descriptive bookkeeping, real-time data changes will shift the finance role. Finance leaders will take a greater strategic role, using real-time data to look around corners earlier. Expectations of advisors will change too, with proactive, year-round advice a big expectation.

90%

Expect **real-time numbers** within three years

86%

Believe future finance teams need **data interpretation skills**

85%

Think finance teams will spend more time **driving decisions**

"In the past, it's been a **rear-view reporting** angle. Now we quickly shift into forward-looking discussions around 'what's the sales outlook? How does the performance look all the way through the sales funnel?'"

Krister Aanesen
Nordics CEO, Azets

"It moves finance from being the people who produce the numbers to being the people who interpret the numbers, generate insight, challenge, and start that debate of **helping people look around corners earlier.**"

Neil Martin,
Group CFO, Azets



Question: How do you expect your relationship with external financial advisors to change over the next year?

We'll want **proactive**, year-round advice rather than compliance work **39%**

We'll bring more services together with **one trusted partner** **25%**

We'll expect them to provide technology we can't build ourselves **22%**

We'll expect deeper knowledge of our specific sector **12%**

We'll do more in-house and use them less **5%**

We'll switch to whoever is cheapest **1%**

We don't expect it to change **5%**

> Predictive intelligence brings opportunities, but should also support risk management by planning for different scenarios

Melanie Richards CBE
Chair of the Board of Directors, Azets Group



KEY TREND

Eyes on the horizon

Azets predicts

Finance leaders will move away from 'month-end close' and spend more time looking forward, with modeling technology enabling greater scenario planning and strategic decision making.

Businesses need to hire their finance teams for their imagination and strategic judgement, not their data entry skills.

Firms will continue to demand proactive, year-round strategic guidance and tech help from a single trusted partner.

03

> Finance will move further away from being primarily reporting and control to a more integrated commercial partner, **challenging assumptions and supporting strategic decisions**"

Kristine Vergli Grant-Carlsen
CFO Norway, Azets



04

KEY TREND 4

The AI reality

AI and automation find their place; as the highly-gifted colleague that needs supervision

AI and automation tools find their place within businesses

Worry about AI stealing jobs gives way to **a more optimistic reality**, as leaders tell us they will use automation to cut costs and cut out some of the more repetitive admin work that leads to employee burnout.

45%

Saw the **most value** from automation and digitisation

"I don't think that AI will replace humans. Humans who use AI really well will replace humans who don't use AI very well. I think 2027 is where we'll start to see the gap increase."

Neil Martin
Group CFO, Azets

Expectations are high for AI to take on routine tasks. **Automation will change the nature of these services, rather than making them redundant.**

73%

Expect to spend **more time checking** the outputs from technology than they saved by using it

83%

Expect bookkeeping and payroll to be **largely automated**

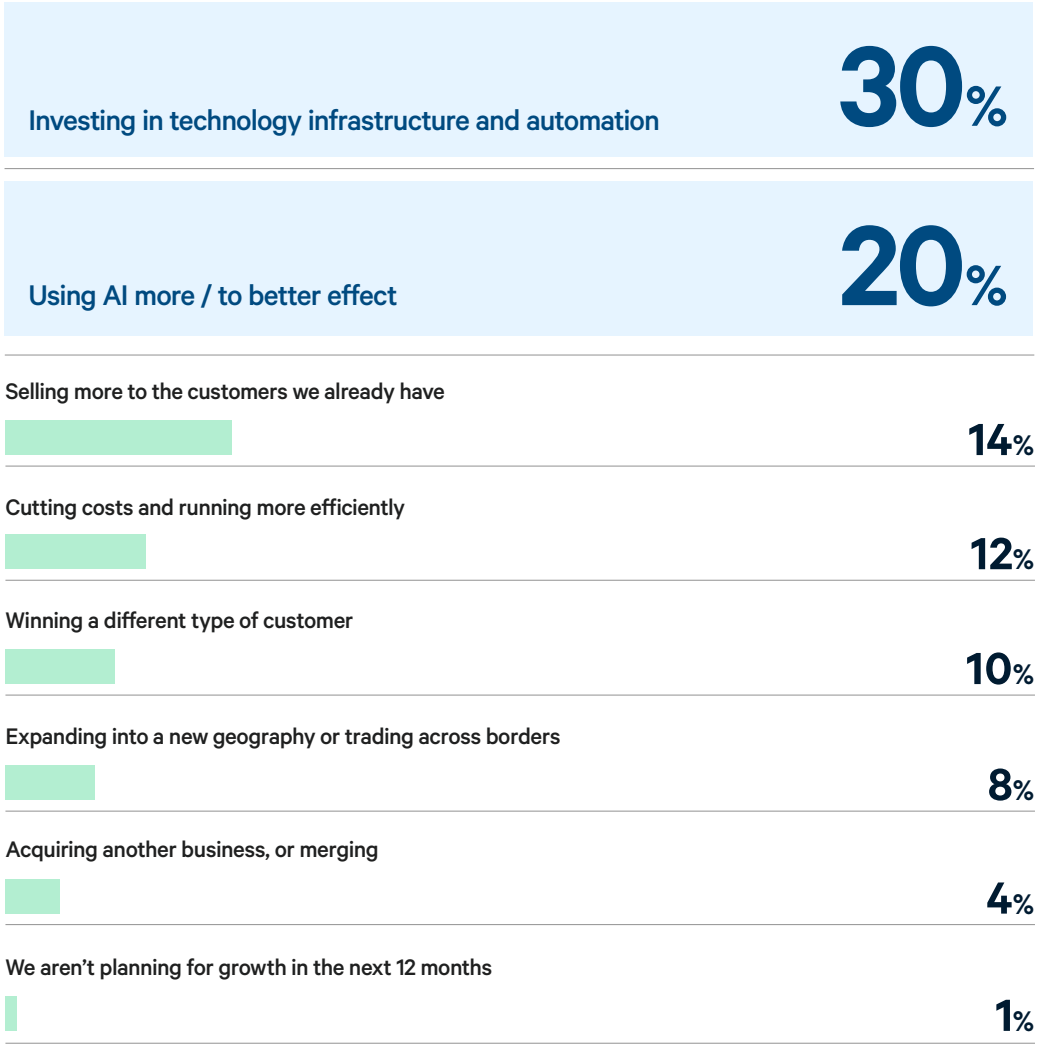
"I don't think that junior jobs will disappear. I think they will change, so instead of performing a process, they may now check output and monitor quality"

Brede Huser,
CFO Nordics, Azets

Half of all business growth plans for 2027 cite AI and technology

Investing in technology and using AI to better effect are the top two paths to growth cited by business leaders. Successful implementation of AI may start being measured by employee retention, not headcount reduction. Technology will continue to free finance staff to do what they do best — building relationships and solving problems.

Question: Which of the following will your business rely on most to grow in the next 12 months?



KEY TREND
The AI reality

Azets predicts

AI in 2027 will continue to be treated as an eager, brilliant, but sometimes erratic junior colleague.

Focus will shift from administration to editorial judgment and quality control: as teams increasingly review outputs, evaluate AI-generated insights and verify data integrity as key inputs for their business.

Winning with AI will mean seeing automation as a way to upgrade the daily working experience of your staff, rather than a potential replacement for them.



04

> It's not just about having the technology; **you need quality people able to use these new tools.**
>
> Firms that are appreciative of the people investment will be those that get this right."

Tony Sacre
President and CEO, Allinial Global



05

KEY TREND 5

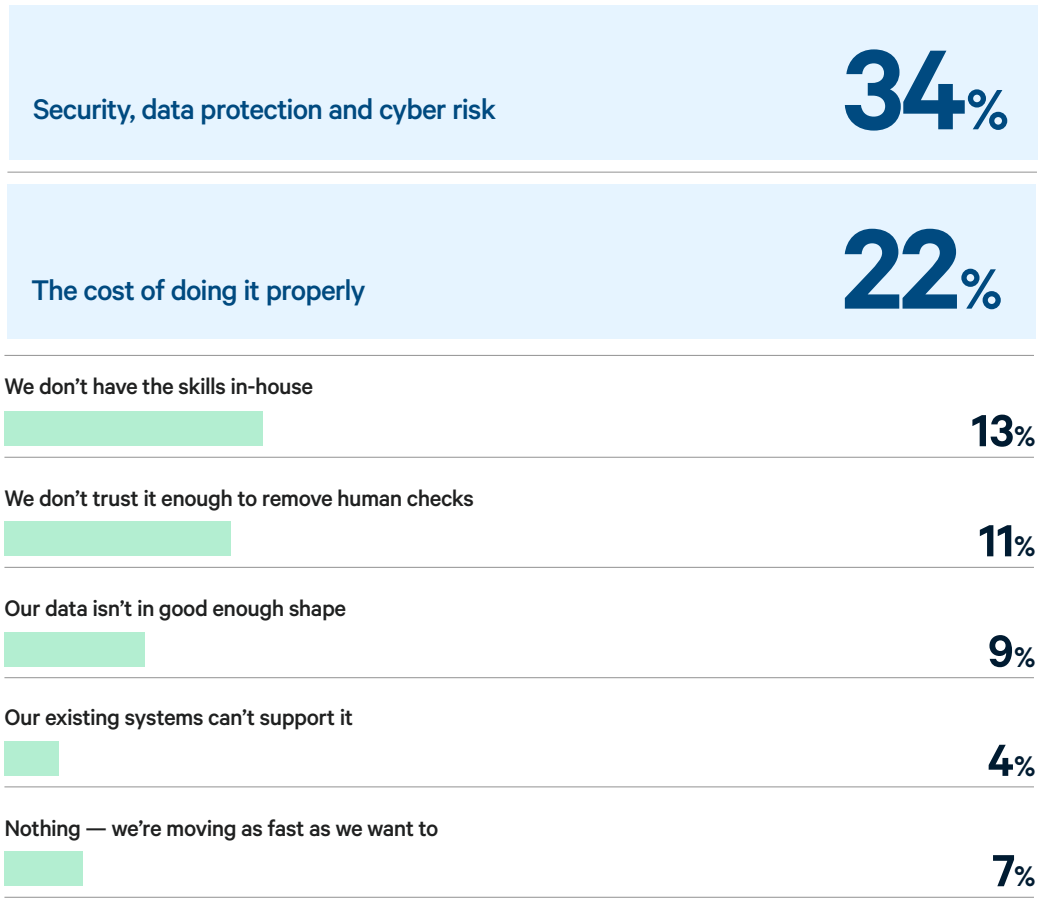
Cybersecurity is a finance issue

Opening the door to AI and automation highlights the need to get systems, people and data in order

Security is the number one barrier to automation, *not cost*

More leaders name security, data protection and cyber risk as what is holding their finance function back than name the cost of doing it properly.

Question: What is most likely to hold your finance function back from using automation or AI more in the year ahead?



> Cybersecurity is going to be on the agenda for many companies as they open the door and start thinking about AI. When you start thinking about AI, you start thinking about your own data. And when you start thinking about your own data, then **security comes up naturally."**
>
> **Brede Huser**
> Nordics CFO, Azets

Cybersecurity is the main blind spot for businesses

Question: What would you tell business leaders to prioritise in 2027?

"Invest in cybersecurity training, because employees are still one of our most important weaknesses"

Financial Operations Director, Manufacturing, 250-499 Employees, Finland

"Build cross-functional collaboration between finance, IT, and operations teams"

Chief Technology Officer, Manufacturing, 1000+ Employees, UK

"I would recommend focusing on preparing well in advance for regulatory and technological changes"

CFO, Finance & Insurance, 100-249 employees, Norway

"Invest in technology early, strengthen cybersecurity, and continuously develop people who can adapt quickly"

CEO, Finance & Insurance, 500-999 employees, UK

"Invest in your people and data before chasing after technology, because fixing them later is far more difficult"

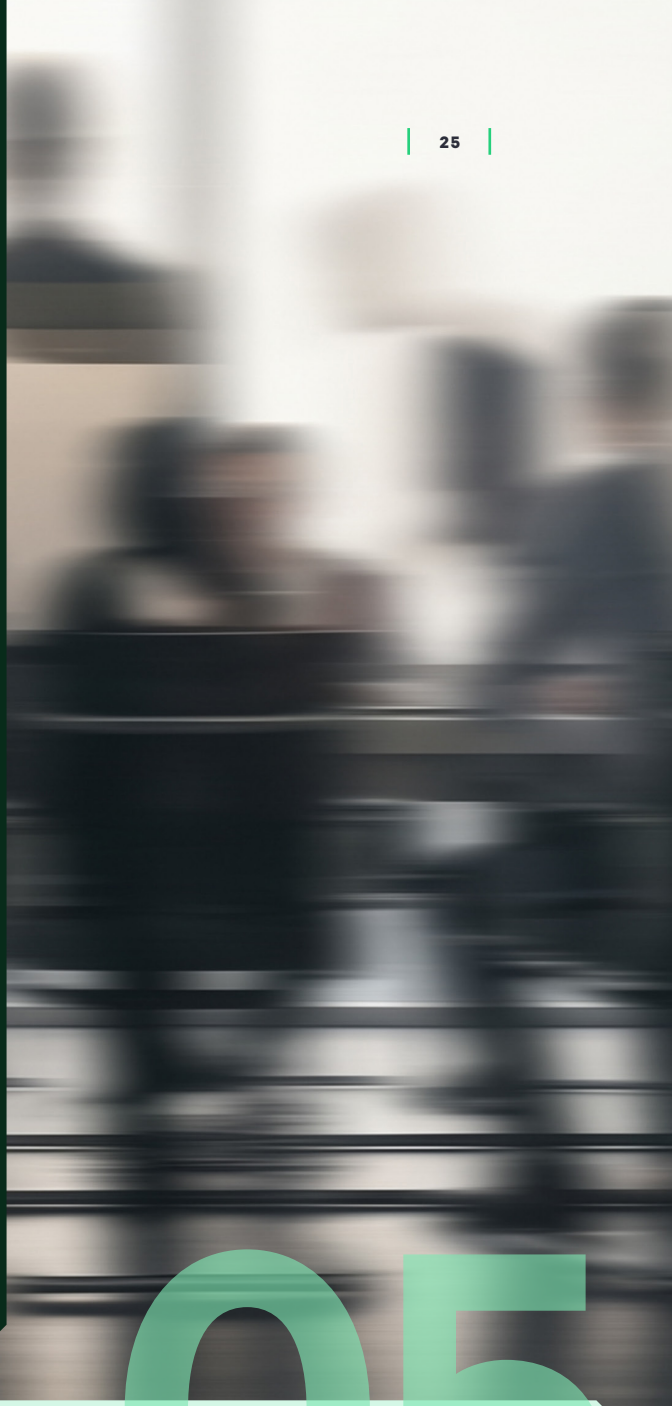
CFO, Manufacturing, 500-999 employees, UK

"I would tell them to get data and AI governance in order, because authorities and attackers do not wait"

IT Manager, Technology, 500-999 employees, Sweden



The downsides of cyber breaches can far outweigh the advantages that technology can bring



KEY TREND

Cybersecurity is a finance issue

Azets predicts

Finance can no longer defer cybersecurity to IT. The key shift for 2027 will be taking ownership of your cyber agenda and resolving your data governance issues before you can safely scale AI and automation.

Assuming your business is safe from cyberattack in 2027 is the biggest trap for the year ahead. Proactive finance leaders will be actively auditing and testing their cyber blind spots.

Cybersecurity is a team effort. Untrained employees are a key vulnerability, making continuous cyber awareness and upskilling essential for the entire finance department.

05

> The **most effective CFOs and advisors** will be those who combine financial expertise with an understanding of data, technology, cybersecurity, governance, and change management."

Global Accounting & Advisory Leader,
Allinial Global Network

The finance leaders' guide to 2027

Practical advice from industry leaders on how to make 2027 a success

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Global leaders caution against complacency

The biggest blind spots are cyber-threat, employees moving on and AI over-reliance

Question: What do you think is the biggest blind spot for businesses like yours right now — the element being ignored that will cause problems in 2027?

26%

Underestimating how exposed we are to fraud and cyber attack

20%

Assuming the people we rely on will stay

16%

Assuming AI will deliver more than it actually will

15%

Hoping supply chain and trade disruption will settle down on its own

Not being ready for tax or regulatory change — 7%

Carrying debt that was affordable at old interest rates — 6%

Deferring investment for so long that we can't catch up — 5%

Depending on too few customers — 2%

Not anticipating macroeconomic or geopolitical forces — 2%

On the horizon are evolving legislation, deeper reporting requirements and new rules for finance teams to navigate

Question: Which of the following changes do you expect to be most challenging for your business?

Cyber security and operational resilience requirements **40%**

Employment law and pay transparency requirements **31%**

Sustainability and corporate reporting requirements **30%**

Rules governing the use of AI **27%**

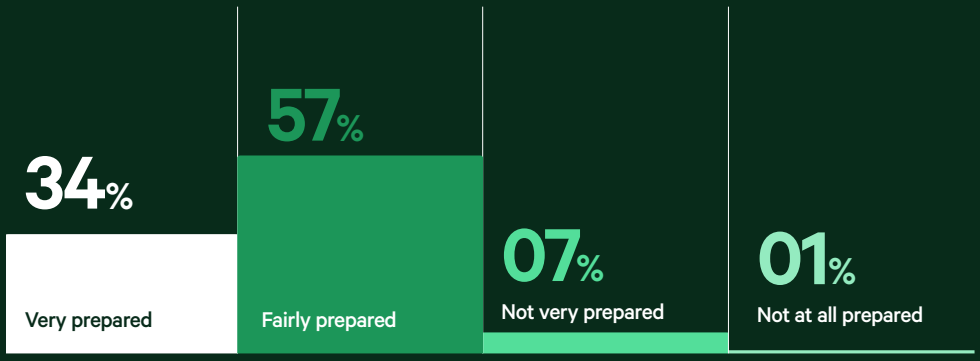
Mandatory e-invoicing and digital reporting to tax authorities **22%**

Cross-border tax rules **19%**

Customs and trade documentation **15%**

But leaders tell us they are ***ready for the change***

Question: Do you feel adequately prepared for the changes you selected?



A view from the boardroom

Finance heavyweights from across the globe share their focus areas for 2027



Don't forget the basics

In the midst of the opportunity, don't forget the basics: understand your cashflow as much as your profit. There's huge opportunity, **but the only certainty is how much money you have in the bank.**

Melanie Richards, CBE Group Chair, Azets

"I would recommend focusing on preparing well in advance for regulatory and technological changes"

CFO, finance & insurance, 100-249 employees, Norway

"Look for opportunities to diversify the customer base and enter new markets"

COO, manufacturing, 100-249 employees, Denmark

The AI governance gap

"The widening gap between the speed of AI adoption and the maturity of governance around it. Businesses are moving rapidly into AI, but governance, risk management, controls and accountability are not evolving at the same pace."

"Many organizations are focused on deploying AI but have not invested sufficiently in the quality, governance, and accessibility of their underlying data. Poor data will simply produce poor outcomes faster."

Building agility must take precedence over waiting for stability to return

"Businesses are dealing simultaneously with wars and geopolitical instability, inflation and energy costs, changing trade relationships, immigration and talent constraints, and extraordinarily rapid technological change. The lesson for me is that **we need to build businesses that don't require our predictions to be right**."

"The **biggest blind spot** is waiting for the world to become predictable again".

Macroeconomic wildcards: interest rates and delayed inflation

"I do think fuel costs and the continued stress in the Middle East will bring back more delayed inflation and have some more impact on interest rates before we're all done with 2027."

"I am going to be watching the 30-year mortgage interest rate in the US. It is about 7% currently and if it keeps rising that could have adverse impact on the real estate market in the US and the broader economy."

Shifting from AI hype to measurable productivity

"I will be watching whether businesses can finally convert the enormous investment and attention being given to AI into measurable productivity and financial returns. The winners in 2027 won't necessarily be those using the most AI. They will be those that use it to materially change how work gets done."

AI is a workforce transformation, not just a tech initiative

"Organisations that fail to upskill their people risk creating a significant capability gap between available technology and the skills needed to leverage it effectively."

"For the last 75+ years, our profession has worked under an apprentice model — now **we are moving to a model where the younger staff are teaching the experienced staff about the uses of technology and how it benefits us**, and we see how empowered our younger staff feel."

Businesses often view AI as a technology initiative when it is **actually a workforce transformation initiative**".

Predictive finance: from 'historian' to real-time forecasting

"By 2027, leading organizations will use AI to deliver real-time forecasting, scenario modelling, working capital optimization, and risk monitoring **at a scale that was previously impossible**."

With thanks to all contributors including Partners, Owners and CEOs of the Allinial Global Network.

Dos and don’ts for 2027

Advice from global finance leaders to make 2027 a success

Dos

- ✓ **Do focus on what you can control:** build your organisational agility rather than waiting for stability to return.
- ✓ **Do balance pace with proof:** go for it with automation but make sure you have proof of ROI and productivity gains before scaling your tech investments.
- ✓ **Do fix your data governance first:** clean up your data and set strict AI controls; high-quality data is fundamental to AI success.
- ✓ **Do think ‘right to left’:** think about what a market-leading, disruptive competitor looks like in future and work backward to build that capability today.
- ✓ **Do fewer things, really well:** focus on select deliverables, execute with focus, and move on quickly when an initiative fails.
- ✓ **Do elevate human judgment:** focus your finance function toward problem definition, strategic questioning, and proactive business partnering.

Don’ts

- ✗ **Don’t assume margin pressures can be fixed with price hikes:** redesign broken processes, eliminate low-value work, and address cost-to-serve drivers.
- ✗ **Don’t seek scale without synergy:** avoid expanding or acquiring without integrating platforms, aligning culture, and standardising risk management.
- ✗ **Don’t let AI run unchecked:** automated systems should never run without human verification unless you want to take operational and financial risks.
- ✗ **Don’t steer using a rear-view mirror:** the new ‘month-end’ is now real-time visibility, forward-looking analytics, and continuous forecasting.
- ✗ **Don’t chase data perfection:** getting bogged down trying to clean every piece of enterprise data at once can make you lose sight of the target.
- ✗ **Don’t pitch an outdated career to new talent:** reposition entry-level finance roles as data storytelling and strategic influence.

The finance leaders of tomorrow

Role shifts from historical scorekeeper to strategic co-pilot

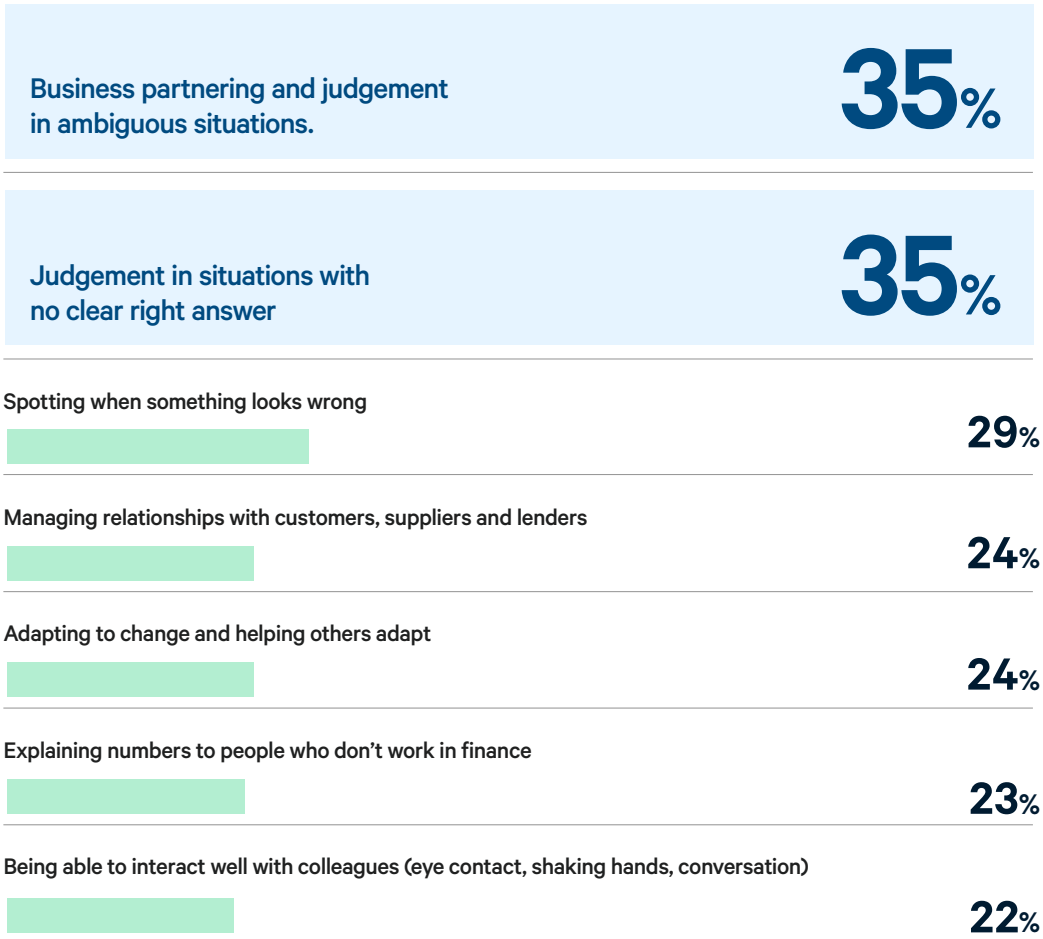
Most desired skills for finance

Role shifts from historical scorekeeper to strategic co-pilot'

The finance leader's remit now stretches from capital allocation to cybersecurity to the sustainability agenda. Asked which human skills will matter most as routine work is automated, no single capability dominates. **Finance leaders of the future need hybrid skills.**

72% believe the finance function is being asked to take on far more than it should be

Question: As more routine work becomes automated, which human skills will matter most in your finance function next year?



"A CFO now has a much wider agenda. It's about value creation: through strategy, commercial and operational management".

Krister Aanesen
Nordics CEO, Azets

How the finance leader's role changes:

The finance leader of the future needs a combination of hard and soft skills. Setting the policy the technology works within and then spotting when something looks wrong.

SKILLS

- Data translation
- Prompt engineering
- Interpreting outputs
- Structuring problems well
- Asking the right questions
- A focused business and objectives mindset
- **A hybrid skillset:** understanding the business, challenging assumptions, modelling alternatives, allocating capital and helping management make better decisions

"The future finance professional will be part strategist, part technologist, and part business leader."

Chairman & CEO,
Allinial Global Network

ATTITUDES

- Curiosity
- Pace vs. proof
- Intellectual curiosity to challenge perceived thinking and rigorously test new tools
- Able to balance urgency and reality
- Comfortable with ambiguity (you don't always need to have all the answers)

"Finance should really help you set the agenda for your business. The role of finance is increasingly about the ability to influence, rather than to say this is last month's numbers."

Neil Martin,
Group CFO, Azets

"The finance leader's job is moving from putting the day together to reviewing it. Once routine work is finished before the team logs in, the value is in judgement: setting the policy the technology works within and then spotting when something looks wrong."

Hillary Norris
30 years' finance, IT and operations experience

TALENTS

- Emotional intelligence
- Complex judgement in situations with no clear answers
- Working in partnership with others
- Helping to explain the numbers to colleagues not in finance
- Both left-brain and right-brain talents

"The biggest challenge as a CFO is: can you operate on a wavelength that resonates emotionally with people? You have to win the hearts for people to fully flourish. You have to be willing to take risks and be seen."

Krister Aanesen,
CEO, Azets Nordics

STYLE

- Right-to-left thinking
- Future-facing
- Transitioning from looking in the rear-view mirror to actively looking around the next corner
- Being able to interact well with colleagues (eye contact, shaking hands, conversation)

"You have to think a little bit more right to left, which is 'if I want to be here in three years, what is an organisation that's incredibly successful in our space, in our sector? What are they doing?'"

Neil Martin,
Group CFO, Azets

"The finance role will continue to evolve from keeper of the numbers, to interpreter of the numbers, to adviser on how the business can perform better"

Dawn Marriott,
Serial Executive Chair, Hg

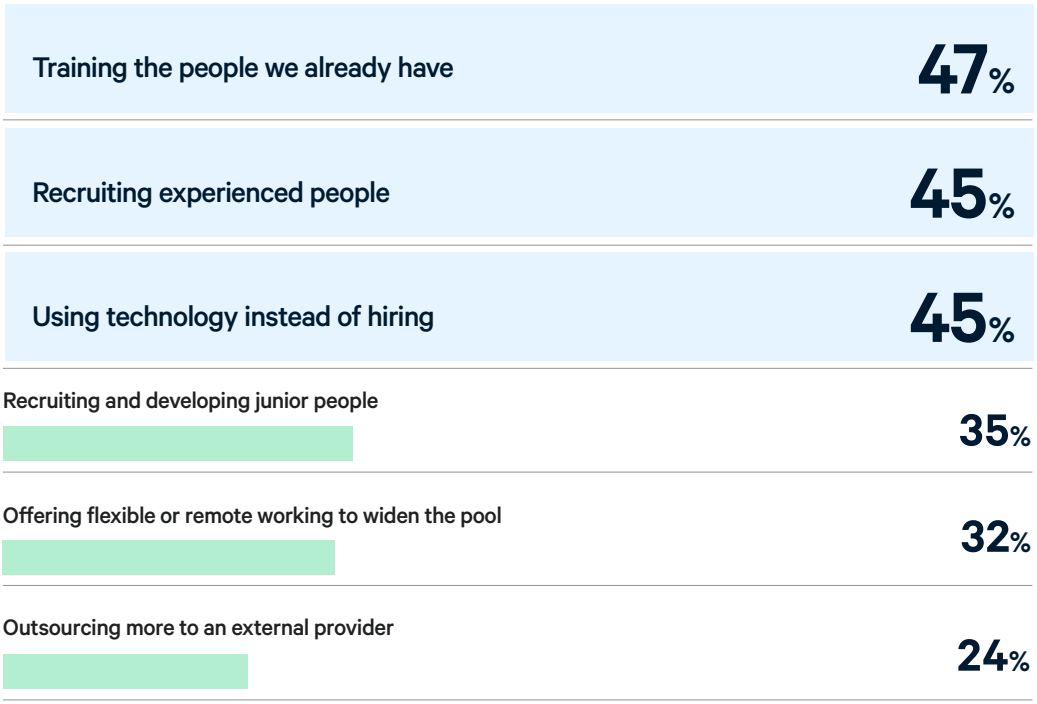
Building the right finance team in 2027

The evolving roles, the skills gaps and learning to do more with less

Challenge: recruiting is tough when talent is short and margin pressures are high

Solution: upskilling the current workforce (47%), recruiting for experience (45%), using tech to fill the gaps (45%).

Question: How do you plan to deal with finance skills gaps over the next year?



"The role of a finance leader and advisor will be constantly evolving. The tools at hand will become more real-time, more complex, and present greater opportunity. For those who engage, it's a chance to advance their careers, their capability with clients, and their overall performance. Exciting times."

Tony Sacre
President and CEO, Allinial Global

Challenge: how to cultivate future senior leaders if AI automates the entry-level admin work

Solution: forward-thinking leaders believe junior roles won't disappear; they will simply transition from data processors to data editors, leveraging technology from day one.

67% say in five years there will be **no such thing as a *'routine'* accounting job**

Leaders are not only struggling to hire. They are also planning to need fewer people. Four in five expect a smaller finance function within three years, and 59% say their business would function perfectly well with fewer people in it today. **The same leaders predict this will be a mistake.**

59% agree their business would function perfectly well with fewer people in it

79% predict businesses will stop hiring junior finance staff because software does that work — **and will regret it**

4in5 expect to have fewer people in finance than they do today

"The finance function can be at the heart of judgments on finely balanced decisions.

Future leaders should be curious. Not just about numbers and forecasts, but underneath the skin of the business and what's happening in the marketplace"

Melanie Richards CBE
Chair of the Board of Directors, Azets Group

"We should stop selling finance as years of processing before you earn a seat at the table. **The next generation will set the rules that technology runs on** and make decisions that move real money from day one. That's a far better pitch than most of us were given".

Hilary Norris
30 years' finance, IT and operations experience

Rebranding the finance career

Leaders recommend changing the narrative.

Challenge: The traditional career path of working long hours and doing repetitive tasks in hopes of eventually making partner no longer appeals to the incoming workforce.

Solution: firms must adapt to new priorities, offering flexible career paths and immediate access to impactful, strategic work.

"We need to do a much better job of communicating what a career in finance actually looks like today — and, more importantly, what it will look like tomorrow. **Finance professionals are involved in some of the most interesting decisions businesses make**, from investments and strategy to digital transformation and sustainability."

Kristine Vergli Grant-Carlsen
CFO Norway, Azets

"Where's the next crop of leaders coming from? The talent is coming through... but they don't want the same things that maybe we did. It's becoming more challenging because people want different things out of their lives and their careers these days than they did when I joined. Priorities are different."

Nimesh Shah
CEO, Blick Rothenberg

"There are fewer university students who are interested in public accounting so that has not been easy recently, so we had to expand our pool. We focus on communicating to these university students the variety of work and industries and business you will be able to consult on. We also highlight our flexibility."

Managing Partner,
Allinial Global Network

"The best way to attract talent to the industry is to illustrate that the industry is not full of luddites, but rather full of people who genuinely care about their clients and may be able to do their work smarter through a better use of technology."

Tony Sacre,
President and CEO, Allinial Global

The Future of Finance is Exciting

"Finance should help you set the agenda for your business. Sometimes it's easy to be very clear on what your top five priorities are. I challenge people I work with: 'are you confident that your leadership team's got the right agenda?' And if you were to add something to it, what would it be?"

Neil Martin
Group CFO, Azets

"It's the best time to be an accountant. What we're seeing with AI and technology... I've never seen such rapid change in the accounting sector. We're a really cool, trendy profession. We don't talk about that enough. Look how far we've come."

Nimesh Shah,
CEO, Blick Rothenberg

"The next generation is excited by solving complex problems, leveraging technology, and making an impact. That is a compelling career proposition."

Managing Partner,
Allinial Global Network

"The next generation should not see finance as primarily accounting, reporting and compliance. If we demonstrate that finance prepares them to assume strategic business leadership positions, the profession becomes more attractive."

General Manager,
Allinial Global Network

"If we describe finance as years of processing transactions, checking numbers, and doing repetitive work before eventually getting an opportunity to advise businesses, we shouldn't be surprised if talented people choose something else."

Owner & Consultant,
Allinial Global Network

Methodology and demographics

Who we spoke to

Future of Finance is an independent research study commissioned by Azets and conducted by Reputation Leaders.

All data is based on a survey of 241 C-suite executives, senior leaders and finance decision-makers in the UK, Ireland, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, conducted in September 2026.

Respondents represent organisations of significant scale: 82% employ more than 250 people, and 79% have annual turnover above €50 million.

Reputation Leaders conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with Azets executives and external opinion leaders to provide expert commentary and verbatim quotes within the report:

- **Tony Sacre**, President and CEO, Allinial Global
- **5 Partners, Owners and CEOs** of the Allinial Global Network
- **Dawn Marriott**, Executive Chair, HG Capital
- **Nimesh Shah**, CEO, Blick Rothenberg
- **Krister Aanesen**, CEO, Azets Nordics
- **Neil Martin**, Group CFO, Azets
- **Brede Huser**, CFO, Azets Nordics

241
Total respondents

187
C-suite

51
CFOs

5
Board members

6
Countries

198
Businesses with 250+ employees

AZETS

Move forward with confidence

Take a fresh look at the year ahead

Leaders are clear about the pressure their businesses are under, and they are looking to the future with a mixture of realism and bold ambition. The finance function has their work cut out: scan the horizon, weigh the risks worth taking, and turn data into decisions. No one knows the future, but the businesses that enter 2027 strongest are likely to be those that adopt new technology where it earns its place, while holding on to the experience and judgement of their people. The finance leaders of the future are strategists, counsellors, rudders, detail holders and pragmatists that have never been more needed in business.

Contact us

Want to talk to Azets about what the future holds for your business?

Contact Azets today for expert advice and support in planning for the year ahead. Our role is to help businesses get ready for what's coming, whether that's making technology work harder across your finance function, building the skills your team will need, staying ahead of changing reporting requirements, or finding the opportunities in a difficult market. By offering tailored solutions, human-led expertise and pragmatic guidance, our specialist support can help you move into 2027 with confidence.

BLICK ROTHENBERG
a part of AZETS

Title

Subtitle

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