RAMP UP GROWTH ADVISORS · FINANCE FUNCTION FRAMEWORK

The FP&A Maturity Model

Four Stages From Record-Keeper to Strategic Co-Pilot

By **Christian Liu, CPA, CMA, MBA** — Founder, RampUp Growth Advisors | Contract Instructor, Sprott School of Business, Carleton University

> Every finance function sits somewhere on this ladder — usually further down than its leaders assume. The stage you're at isn't about headcount or tools; it's about whether the business asks finance for the answer, or just the report.

1

Record Keeper

Finance produces historical statements. The close is the main event. Nobody outside finance reads the output until something goes wrong.

WHAT LEADERSHIP ASKS
"Are the books done?"

2

Analyst

Budgets, variance analysis, and KPI dashboards exist. Finance explains what happened and why, usually a few weeks after it did.

WHAT LEADERSHIP ASKS
"Why were we over budget?"

3

Business Partner

Finance sits in planning meetings, not just reporting meetings. Forecasts are forward-looking and shape real decisions before they're made.

WHAT LEADERSHIP ASKS
"What does this decision do to the numbers?"

4

Strategic Co-Pilot

Finance runs scenario models, shapes capital allocation, and has a standing voice at the board table on where the business goes next.

WHAT LEADERSHIP ASKS
"What should we do next — and what's the downside?"

Most finance teams plateau at Stage 2 — not from lack of talent, but from lack of a forward-looking cadence.

"A finance team that only explains the past will always be treated like an administrative function."