

The most current information on how financial professionals can increase cash flow & control costs.

November 26, 2021

KEY FINANCE FIGURES

	Curr*	Lst Mo	Lst Yr
■ Leading Rates %			
Prime Rate	3.25	3.25	3.25
Fed Funds Rate	0.25	0.25	0.25
■ Money Market Rates %			
<i>London Interbank (LIBOR)</i>			
1 month	0.08	0.09	0.14
3 months	0.15	0.13	0.21
6 months	0.22	0.16	0.24
■ Stock & Bond Indexes			
DJIA	36,320	34,746	29,158
S&P 500	4,685	4,391	3,551
NASDAQ	15,887	14,580	11,713
5-Yr T-Bill	1.04	1.05	0.44
10-Yr T-Bill	1.45	1.61	0.96
■ NACM Credit Managers' Index			
Sales	72.7	70.4	74.2
New credit apps	64.6	65.0	65.2
Dollar collections	63.4	61.1	64.6

*As of 11/8/21

The Cumulative Effect of CFO & Controller Alert

With the pace of change accelerating and the competition tougher, what's the best chance to keep up performance and get two steps ahead of the competition? A reliable source of continuous information.

It's the **cumulative effect** that helps, not any one reading. Our unique function is to deliver solid, focused information in your area of responsibility in a fast-read format twice a month to help performance.

Slow pays not going away: New delinquency benchmarks

■ 15% of B2B receivables currently past due

Forget the 7th-inning stretch! Many of your fellow CFOs are feeling the 11th-inning stretch! And it's putting a serious cramp in their cash flow.

As we prepare to close out the year, a full 15% of business-to-business receivables are past-due.

That's according to the new *B2B Payments Innovation Readiness report*, a collaboration between PYMNTS and American Express.

Nobody wants to carry old agings into a new year.

With a little more than a month to go in 2021, here are some compelling reasons to move quickly with a team

effort to start the new year with a healthy cash position.

The case for fast follow-up

If your team thinks they should give past-dues a bit of a long leash before they follow up, you'll want to pass this along.

There is ZERO time to waste when contacting delinquent customers. Holding off can be seriously costly.

Just how costly? Share these eye openers:

- Companies that wait an average

(Please see Benchmarks ... on Page 2)

FBI: Ransomware hits on holidays, weekends

■ Companies will be extra vulnerable for the remainder of 2021

The most festive time of the year might also be the most vulnerable time of the year for companies on the data security front.

The FBI recently came out with a warning that holidays and weekends tend to be the time when most "highly impactful" ransomware attacks strike.

That goes for both large and small companies.

Unfortunately, you're facing a double whammy these next couple of months: In 2021, all the end-of-year holidays fall on weekends.

The idea being most businesses are

closed and fewer companies are monitoring, so cyberattackers exploit that.

Ransomware casualties up 20%

No time to lose! You'll want to talk with IT immediately to ensure all your defenses are heightened.

The stakes are higher than ever: Ransomware incidents increased by 20%, as did the reported losses from attacks in the first half of this year.

Info: To read the FBI warning, go to us-cert.cisa.gov/ncas/alerts/aa21-243a

Benchmarks ...

(continued from Page 1)

of 45 days to follow up on overdue payments have 26% of their receivables overdue, while

- Companies that follow up within five days of payments becoming overdue have an 8.8% delinquency rate.

So your proactive peers are seeing past-due rates at 40% below the average. That translates into a ton of money!

Odds are your own credit and collections team understands the urgency and the bottom-line impact of being quick to react. (Though these numbers serve as an excellent benchmark to see how your own department's delinquency rate compares.)

But this info might just get some other groups critical to the collection process more involved, including:

- **Sales.** Need your salesforce to get

more involved in your collections process? These numbers can help

Your proactive peers see 40% lower past-due rates.

support why an all-hands-on-deck approach is critical.

- **IT.** Greater automation can have a substantial impact on the effectiveness of your collections. Share these new stats to get higher on the tech priority list.

A two-front focus

Whether you enlist Sales, IT or simply go it alone with your existing finance staffers, you want to focus on two fronts:

1. How you prioritize collections.

How strategically does your team handle this critical task? Consider embracing a more risk-based method over the traditional approach of how much is owed and how late it is.

The folks at Dun & Bradstreet advocate factoring in customer data such as business credit scores, trade payment history and financial statements when determining how to prioritize collections.

2. How quickly you send payment reminders. Folks don't necessarily have to be jumping on the phones. When speed is of the essence, a well-crafted email can help.

Just make sure the subject line contains the words Payment Reminder, the invoice number and the due date. Then either attach the invoice or send a link to your portal to eliminate further delays.

Info: You'll find additional survey details at pymnts.com/news/b2b-payments/2021/new-research-shows-15-pct-of-b2b-receivables-are-overdue

Sharpen your JUDGMENT

This feature provides a framework for decision making that helps keep you and your company out of trouble. It describes a recent legal conflict and lets you judge the outcome.

■ Should employee be fired for sending all-staff email?

CFO Bill Keeper's cell phone began to ring. He was thankful that it wasn't a "Spam Risk" call, but surprised to see it was his business owner friend, Brian Hackett.

"Brian, what can I do for you?" Bill answered.

"Bill, I think I may have stepped in it when I fired that Darryl Steurmer guy," he replied.

"The one that sent the email to the entire company?" Bill asked. "Sounds like insubordination to me."

"Darryl took it upon himself to be the first one to tell everybody about one of our employees testing positive for COVID. That's not his job. I got mad and fired him," Brian said.

"But now OSHA's involved."

Termination justified?

"Oh no! He went to the feds?" Bill asked.

"He told OSHA he asked management to notify all employees immediately about their risk of exposure to COVID," said Brian. "In his opinion, we didn't take action fast enough."

Darryl complained to OSHA that his employer had retaliated against him for notifying his co-workers about a serious health hazard.

Was he able to convince the agency to take the company to court?

- Make your decision, then please turn to Page 6 for the court's ruling.



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Terms tyrants! Ensuring your company still gets a good deal

■ *When a supplier won't budge, you can still benefit*

“Those are our terms – take them or leave them!”

Chances are your company's purchasers have heard this from a supplier or two in their day.

These folks contend they're the “best in the industry” or “highly specialized” so they can call all the shots when it comes to what type of deal your company receives.

But you don't want to get saddled with whatever that supplier wants to offer.

So what can be done?

Plenty, say the folks at StrategicSourceror.

Even when a vendor appears unwilling to budge, there may be things you can still negotiate

to secure a better deal for your company.

What they were able to negotiate

Share these real-life negotiation wins with take-it-or-leave-it suppliers to inspire your own team to get creative:

FOR MORE ...

To identify a unified goal for Finance and Procurement, go to cfoandcontrolleralert.com/finally-procurement-and-finance-align

- additional training hours beyond the 10 for administrators within the first 30 days extended to 20 hours over 3 months
- two extra licenses

- reduced written notice requirement to not renew from 60 days down to 30
- a test-driving of another product the supplier offers.

Info: strategicsourceror.com/2021/05/take-or-leave-it-contracts-what.html

IRS: Staffing strategy won't jeopardize 401(k)

■ *Rehiring retirees doesn't negatively impact retirement plans*

As we're in the midst of the Great Resignation and it's tougher than ever to fill vacant positions, your company may consider bringing back some former employees who've retired.

After all, they're familiar with your company, likely parted on good terms and wouldn't require a costly and time-consuming ramp up.

We have good news for you: Bringing those folks back won't jeopardize your retirement plan compliance. That's the word straight from IRS in a new FAQ it recently posted on its website.

And it's true even if those people have started receiving payouts from

your plan because they're 59½ or your plan's retirement age.

You can keep paying out benefits

Also important to note: As long as your plan permits it, you can continue paying out those retirement plan benefits to those people even when they're back on your payroll.

This new info may just bump this staffing strategy higher on your company's go-to list.

Info: You can find the new FAQ (added 10/22/21) at irs.gov/newsroom/coronavirus-related-relief-for-retirement-plans-and-iras-questions-and-answers

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

■ It begins! Fed eases up on its monetary policy

Well it looks like we're probably going to end 2021 without a rate hike from the Federal Reserve.

The central bank decided to hold the target range for the federal funds rate at 0% to 1/4% during its latest Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting.

But that doesn't mean it plans to hold the course completely.

The Fed will ease up on the second prong of its recent monetary policy: asset purchases.

The newest plan and its timetable:

- Late November: increase holdings of Treasury securities by at least \$70 billion per month and of agency mortgage-backed securities by at least \$35 billion per month.
- December: increase holdings of Treasury securities by at least \$60 billion per month and of agency mortgage-backed securities by at least \$30 billion per month.

Looking to 2022

The taper is expected to help get us closer to the Fed's long-term goal of maximum employment and inflation at the rate of 2% over the longer run.

And while the Fed acknowledged that the coronavirus still looms large over our recovery prospects, it also maintains that overall financial conditions remain “accommodative.”

So will the Fed adjust the other prong and raise interest rates in the new year? Guess we'll have to see how this first pullback goes.

Stay tuned.

(To read the Fed's latest FOMC statement, go to federalreserve.gov/newsevents/pressreleases/monetary20211103a.htm)

Electronically paying staffers daily? Some of your peers are trying it

■ *Could weekly, biweekly pay cycles become a thing of the past?*

As the holidays draw closer, your employees may find themselves strapped for cash and in need of a lifeline.

A solution may be flexible electronic methods like PayPal, Zelle, payroll cards or even daily pay, where workers have on-demand access to what they've earned instead of waiting until payday.

According to ADP, nearly half of all employees are willing to accept these newer payment options. But would they be a good fit for your company?

Factors to consider

In a Zoom interview, Scot Parnell, CFO of DailyPay, estimated that 37% of your peers at companies with 500 or more employees are either using on-demand pay to some degree or are exploring it.

Besides slashing costs involved

with cutting paychecks/direct deposit, potential benefits of adopting an electronic, flexible pay option include:

- saving employees money on overdraft and ATM fees, payroll lending, and credit card interest and late fees (common issues with holiday spending)
- reducing employee absenteeism caused by financial stress, such as childcare or transportation costs
- faster recruitment time because daily pay is an attractive benefit for prospective employees, and
- improved employee retention, reducing turnover costs.

According to Ceridian, whose Dayforce Wallet has an on-demand pay card feature, when workers have financial flexibility and can better manage unexpected expenses, "they can be more productive and engaged at work."

Info: bit.ly/dailypay616

4 steps to avoid purchase order cyberattacks

■ *Even legitimate-looking emails need due diligence*

Increasingly clever ransomware criminals are out to take your company's money. They'd even stoop so low as hacking you with a purchase order that looks real.

For example, emails with an attachment disguised as a P.O. can contain links to a bogus site that tricks users into sharing sensitive account info.

Because of the volume of email your team handles, they could be vulnerable to a costly attack.

Attachment best practices

Some important reminders for finance staffers:

1. Double-check email sender details. If the sender is unfamiliar or if something seems off about the address, it could be suspicious.
2. If an email attachment comes from someone you know, but normally doesn't send P.O.s, hold off on opening it and call the sender to verify that it came from them.
3. Be suspicious of any attachment that asks you to open an embedded link because scripting or editing is disabled.
4. Don't open personal emails on company-owned devices and vice-versa.

Info: techtalk.gfi.com/hacked-by-a-purchase-order

MANAGING FOR RESULTS

■ Stumped by a challenge? 3 ways to get unstuck

Some problems can seem so complex and overwhelming that staffers can get stuck and not know where to begin.

That's when it's time to step back, reassess and think of more creative approaches to resolution.

Problem-solving techniques

Instead of tackling that problem head-on, try reverse engineering, or even blowing it out of proportion:

1. **Hold a reverse brainstorming meeting with your team.** Have them come up with ways to make a problem worse, like decreasing sales or increasing expenses. It seems counterproductive – until you tell team members they have to think up ways to undo the negative "solutions" they suggested, which can reveal the real solution.
2. **Start with the end goal, then work backwards.** What's the final stage prior to reaching the goal? What comes before that? Step by step, you work backward to the present stage. Then compare those stages to the standard, start-to-finish process. How are they the same and how are they different?
3. **Imagine that each problem you're dealing with is 10 times worse than it is.** This is great when the issue is prioritizing tasks. Dwight Eisenhower used this strategy when he was a general in the U.S. Army. When looking at that to-do list through a magnified lens, whatever has the most significant big-picture impact tends to become clearer and rise to the top.

(Adapted in part from "Six Creative Ways to Solve a Problem," at Success.com)

Our subscribers come from a broad range of companies, both large and small. In this regular feature, three of them share success stories you can adapt to your unique situation.

1 Prioritized tech budget to drive efficiency, security

As pandemic-related challenges lingered, we realized our company had to stay agile.

We successfully adapted to a dispersed workforce, but I couldn't help thinking there were areas where we could be working smarter.

Supply chain constraints were also a concern. Our purchasers had little leverage to negotiate prices and keep spending under control. Could supply chain analysis software help by pointing us to alternative suppliers?

It was time to huddle up with IT and come up with a plan of action to evaluate our tech spending.

Identified priorities

The meetings with IT revealed:

1. We need more feedback from our people about the tools we're using to virtually and securely bring people together and collaborate. We sent out employee surveys asking what they use, what works, etc., to decide what's worth investing in.
2. Because we're going to

continue to rely on digital tools, shoring up our network security is a must so we're not dealing with costly breaches.

3. Adopting enhanced supply chain analysis and management solutions may have a good ROI because of cost control potential.

It's becoming clearer what we need to budget for technology so that we can work more efficiently and navigate any changes in the business landscape.

(Diana Bonmarens, CFO, Whitmores, East Hampton, NY)

**REAL PROBLEMS
REAL SOLUTIONS**

2 Celebrating progress as well as the big wins

In business, you can't win them all, right?

In fact, no business even wins most of the time.

And one problem with that is if you only use wins to celebrate, you might not get to cheer and motivate your team often enough.

Recognizing the good stuff

That's why I thought it was important to celebrate successes as

much as – if not more than – wins.

There was an additional motivation behind the move as well.

Truth is, recognition often helps fuel friendly competition without burning out people.

So I hold monthly luncheons to celebrate high achievements and improvements.

I want to publicly acknowledge and praise people or teams who've moved the needle just as much as those who managed to

surpass goals.

And guess what happened?

Success spurs success

The recognition engages and encourages everyone to perform even better going forward.

(Rick Hendrick, Owner, Hendrick Motorsports, Concord, NC, shared his success in the Don Yaeger podcast)

3 Our tool to tackle sales and use tax today

Because COVID-19 disrupted tax collection efforts by our state and the states we do business in, they were determined to recoup revenue by:

- taxing digital goods and services
- increasing sales and use tax audits of business, and
- cracking down on remote sellers that do business in the state, but don't register as a taxpayer.

So compliance changed for us.

No matter what, it's important

to collect and remit sales tax accurately and on time.

Sales tax assessment

We created a "Do We Have Any of These in Our States?" checklist. A "yes" to any of these probably means we need to collect and pay sales and use tax:

- direct, online or remote sales and/or transactions that exceed the state threshold
- a physical location or owned/leased "real property"
- employees, including field sales

and maintenance staff

- marketing or web advertising, or
- commissions that would involve a Form 1099.

From there, we made sure the departments of revenue in the appropriate states had a sales tax ID number and/or a business license for our company on record. We're confident that we'd pass an audit with flying colors.

(Matthew Hammond, National Sales Manager, Avalara, as presented in the webinar "Sales Tax 101: A Beginner's Guide to Compliance")

2022 salary snapshot: What your peers are paying their A/P, A/R and Payroll staffers now

■ How does your compensation compare?

When it comes to hiring trends in Finance and Accounting, 2022 may be known as the Year of the Entry Level Staffer.

Many of your peers are focusing on the best and brightest who are just beginning in the profession as they expand their teams. The main reasons:

- These folks can offer new perspectives, and
- They can be trained on company-specific processes and systems.

Reverse mentoring a must

Of course, to set your department up for maximum success with this strategy, you need to show these newbies how valued they are.

A great way to do this: a reverse mentoring program.

Nearly three quarters (71%) of senior financial managers said their company has early-career staffers exchange skills, knowledge and insights with senior team members.

2022 STARTING SALARIES IN ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE

	25th percentile	50th percentile	75th percentile
Accounts Payable Clerk	\$34,500	\$39,250	\$48,250
Accounts Payable Manager	\$50,750	\$65,000	\$79,500
Accounts Receivable Clerk	\$34,500	\$39,250	\$48,250
Accounts Receivable Manager	\$50,750	\$65,000	\$79,500
Payroll Clerk	\$34,750	\$41,750	\$51,500
Payroll Manager	\$63,250	\$78,500	\$93,000

Source: The Robert Half 2022 Salary Guide

As you finalize your budgets for 2022, compare your current starting salaries against these benchmarks. If you're planning to add to your finance and accounting team in the new year, these numbers will be extra critical.

Sharpen your judgment... THE DECISION

(please see case on Page 2)

Yes. OSHA sued the employer on Darryl's behalf to not only get his job back, but also for lost wages and benefits as a result of being terminated, punitive damages and other expenses.

The agency determined Darryl's firing was illegal because the email made him a legally protected whistleblower about a major safety issue – possible worker exposure to COVID-19.

Analysis: Retaliation against employees can be costly

Although the case hasn't yet been decided, the employer could end up paying a painfully expensive penalty. This legal

headache could've been avoided had leadership been more responsive to the employee's concerns.

Darryl's email made the boss angry; however, a judge may agree with the feds that it's protected activity.

It's important that employee disciplinary action not look like it's retaliation for activities protected by law, such as communicating with management about safety/health issues, or asking questions/raising concerns about work-related illnesses or injuries.

The Department of Labor has a list of actions that could be considered retaliatory – and fineable – including:

- termination
- demotion, or
- reduced pay/benefits.

Cite: Based on a pending U.S. Dept. of Labor lawsuit against a Texas auto dealership. Dramatized for effect.

Experts give their solutions to difficult workplace problems

Finance professionals like you face new questions every day on how to deal with everything from accounting and tax regulations to management and employment law issues. In this section, experts answer those real-life questions.

Some IRS fines, penalties deductible: Which ones?

Q: Which fines and penalties are deductible under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Sec. 162(f)?

A: Generally, a taxpayer can't take a business expense deduction for fines or penalties paid to the government for violating a law.

That's been the case for years.

After the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act became law in 2017, IRS finalized regs shedding light on IRC Sec. 162.

In the regs, IRS made clear that fines or penalties paid or incurred as the result of a lawsuit, agreement or other situation aren't deductible.

But what about amounts paid or incurred for restitution or remediation, or to come into compliance? Those amounts may be deductible.

That may be the case if the amount is "paid or incurred" by: 1) performing specific services 2) taking a specific corrective action 3) providing specific property or 4) doing some combination of the above.

Note: The taxpayer's intention must be to come into compliance with the specific law that's been violated.

So what happens if an order or agreement requires a taxpayer to come into compliance with a law and the taxpayer elects to upgrade equipment or property to a higher standard than required by law? IRS gave that as an example, explaining amounts paid for that equipment

or property in excess of what's required may be deductible.

Offer FMLA when number of employees fluctuates?

Q: Due to recent changes in our workforce, we're looking closely at the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). We know the law requires us to offer leave if we employ 50 or more employees over 20 or more weeks. When does the clock stop and start?

A: To determine whether you've met the 20-week mark under the FMLA, take the entire calendar year into account – the 20 weeks don't have to be consecutive, reminds Julie Athey. She's the director of compliance for The Robert E. Miller Group, a benefits broker based in Kansas City, MO.

Once you've met that 20-week threshold during a calendar year, the law requires you to offer FMLA leave for the remainder of the year. But that's not all, Athey warns.

An employer would also need to make FMLA leave available to eligible employees for the subsequent calendar year.

Example: A company has 50 or more employees on the payroll for any 20 weeks during 2021. To stay in compliance, says Athey, the company should be ready to offer FMLA leave in 2022 as well.

If you have a question you'd like our experts to answer, email it to Jennifer Azara at jazara@CFODailyNews.com

COMMUNICATION KEYS

■ Making the point stick: 2 keys to effective feedback

To help staffers hone their skills, keep these factors in mind when giving feedback:

1. **Be realistic.** If there's room for improvement, leave out anything the person has no control over and keep the focus on what can be changed.
2. **Is it something you could act on?** To evaluate what your feedback's potential value is to the employee, think about how you would respond to it if you were in their position.

Info: bit.ly/feedback616

■ Prepping for your next slideshow? Try this

If you're going to be sharing slides that have complex content, consider printing them out and distributing them to the audience so they can make notes directly on the printouts.

Printing out the slides tells your audience that the info is important and they may need to refer back to it.

Info: bit.ly/slide616

■ Writing tip: 7 is the magic number

Break up your writings into paragraphs that are seven lines or less in length. That makes it easier for your reader to process the information, retain key points and act on it faster.

Reason: The human brain can only process so much information at once. For example, a long email might be as challenging for your reader to process as it is to wolf down lunch in one bite.

Info: bit.ly/7lines616

Recent developments that can help your business stay ahead

FIRE system filing timetables released by IRS

Companies that use IRS's File Information Returns Electronically (FIRE) system will have an easier go of it this year-end.

The Taxman has now included Form 1099-NEC in its Combined Federal/State Filing program for tax year 2021, as per *Publication 1220*.

So for year-end, any 1099-NECs you file online through the FIRE system will automatically be sent to states. The 1099-MISC is also part of the combined filing program for 2021, along with:

- Form 1099-B
- Form 1099-DIV
- Form 1099-G
- Form 1099-INT
- Form 1099-K
- Form 1099-OID
- Form 1099-PATR
- Form 1099-R, and
- Form 5498.

Audit fees on the rise - what's behind it

Public companies, you're probably paying more for an eternal audit.

Audit fees increased 3.8% year-over-year. That's the word from Financial Executives International's *12th Annual Public Company Audit Fee Study*.

What's behind the hike? Nearly half (49%) of public companies said an increase in the scope of their audits drove costs up.

The good news? The efforts to support those external audits have also increased, said 58% of respondents.

Info: For more on the FEI survey, go to financialexecutives.org/Research/Publications/2021/12th-Annual-

Public-Company-Audit-Fee-Study-Report.aspx

No auto extension for this key form this year

Your team has a tighter deadline this year-end for getting *Forms 1095-C, Employer-Provided Health Insurance Offer and Coverage*, into employees' hands.

According to draft instructions, the deadline will be Jan. 31, 2022.

Since 2016, IRS has been automatically extending the deadline by 30 days. But no more for forms due in 2022.

Note: Your company can still get a 30-day extension. But you'll need to file Form 8809 on or before the end of January.

Info: irs.gov/pub/irs-dft/i109495c--dft.pdf

Study: People will give up this for a 4-day week

With the shift to more flexible work arrangements, has your company given any consideration to a four-day workweek?

Many employees are all for it and cite some pretty compelling benefits in a recent poll by Simple Texting:

- 97.7% believe a 4-day workweek would improve their mental health, while
- 97% of respondents believe they would be more productive with a 4-day workweek.

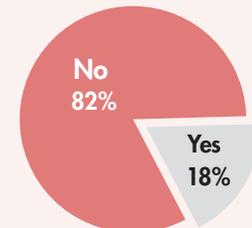
And many would trade some very popular benefits for that shorter week:

- 43% would choose a four-day workweek over free company-provided healthcare, and
 - 38% would rather have a four-day workweek than unlimited PTO.
- Realistically you might already be

MEASURE UP

Risk Red Flag

Are you formally tracking the risks that exist in your direct (tier 1) supplier base?



Source: Deloitte's 2021 Global CPO Survey, deloitte.com

Your company could be in for some very expensive surprises if you're in the majority position. While many firms have gotten better at cost containment with suppliers, few have the ability to detect, measure and manage risk.

paying folks for five days when they only work four: 86% of folks admit that working from home has let them fit five days worth of work into four days.

Info: simpletexting.com/four-day-work-week

Lighter side: Talking turkey!

Thanksgiving has arrived once again. But how much do you and your finance staffers know about the star of this holiday: the turkey?

Some fun facts worth sharing:

- Only male turkeys gobble; females make a clucking sound.
- 46 million turkeys will be consumed on Thanksgiving.
- \$927 million will be spent on turkeys, and
- The average American ate 15.8 lbs of turkey last year.

Info: finder.com/american-thanksgiving-turkey-spend