

Grant Thornton and Micropole present the findings of their « *The future for Management Control positions* » survey

Micropole, an international consulting and innovative technologies group specializing in Data & Digital Experience, and Grant Thornton, an auditing and consulting group operating both in France and worldwide, have jointly launched a national survey to highlight the portrait of the Management Controller in 2020 and provide an overview of the future of this position.

This online survey was carried out among management controllers, financial directors and managers (COOs, CFOs, and MCOs) and financial business analysts of French companies in order to better understand their expectations and their current and future challenges.

More than 300 professionals, covering all French business sectors, responded. Management controllers accounted for 50% of the respondents, financial directors and managers (CFOs, FOs) 33% and business analysts 17%.

The survey focused on four main areas:

- **PEOPLE & ORGANIZATION** – The triptych of technology, management and business, which is essential in bringing value.
- **PROCESS** – Extend analysis and planning to all functional areas, simplify to regain control and adapt to its environment.
- **TECHNOLOGY** – High-tech solutions that are still considered too technical.
- **VISION** – Adapt or disappear.

“We wanted to shed light on the concrete and factual reality of the management controller's job, as well as on the real ambitions and prospects, explains Xavier Gardiès, Partner Head of Finance Transformation & Performance Management at Micropole. The results of this survey confirm that the profession will be greatly transformed, but will not undergo any shock and should not disappear in its current form. However, it will be strongly impacted by the acceleration of technological change and will have to take this evolution into account in its organizational and human components.”

Evolution towards the role of business partner accelerated by the valorization of data

The first finding is that there is not one single management control type, but several management control types. The survey established the typical portrait of the management controller in 2020: 63% of respondents position themselves as controllers who utilize data and 73% confirm this shift towards the role of "business partner".

“Management control is at the heart of the managerial and digital transformation of organizations, says Olivier Rihouet, Partner Digital Performance Management & SAP at Grant Thornton. This is the main take-away from our survey of 300 professionals. Management controllers, who are still too oriented towards simple data production, need to embrace technology to strengthen their strategic vision of the company and thus carry more weight in decision making.”

Towards an extension of performance management to all functions of the organization

The second lesson from this survey is that the extension of analysis and planning tools to operational staff and all company functions is becoming more widespread, and 37% of respondents think that planning should be extended to payroll.

One of the major trends that emerges is the desire to move towards new planning practices, accelerated by the current period: 69% of respondents think that recent events will lead to changes in the way planning (strategic and/or budgetary) is carried out, in particular regarding the implementation of a rolling forecasting logic (80%) and a steering system that is more focused on scenario building (83%).

“The management controller doesn’t just analyze the past, s/he develops scenarii on the future of the corporation based on different assumptions and shares the forecasts to enlighten the management”, emphasizes Frédéric Vole, Management Control Director Technip France at Technip FMC.

An EPM market in which no « game changer » is apparent.

Third point: the survey revealed the significant proportion of companies that are not tooled-up and still use Microsoft Excel to meet their needs. In fact, 42% of respondents said they use this tool for performance management and 65% felt that their tool does not meet their challenges.

“Performance management tools should not be handled by IT departments only, continues Frédéric Vole. We don’t have the time to be confronted with bottlenecks because of various technical or organizational issues. Our tools are far too complex. To power them, there are too many interfaces and application bricks.”

Although they mention the very significant progress made by the solutions in terms of ergonomics, ease of use and flexibility, 67% of respondents feel that their tools are not user-gearred and 83% think that it is necessary to provide management control with a data-visualization tool in addition to an EPM solution.

Impacted by the evolution of technology, management control will be transformed

A final trend concerns the integration of artificial intelligence to these solutions to support management controllers in their tasks and their development. At this stage, 69% of respondents are thinking of integrating predictive models to their tools to facilitate budgeting, forecasting and simulation exercises.

“With this technological revolution, we will see the emergence of a new position capable of analyzing and interpreting data over the next few years, concludes Frédéric Vol. We will then perhaps be looking at a Decision Management Department reporting directly to the General Management.”

Thus, professionals in the position do not see management control disappearing within ten years: 75% of respondents unequivocally converge towards this opinion and 85% think that the profession will evolve into taking a more strategic and decision making focused role.

The complete findings of this survey are available on: <https://bit.ly/3m9aiNc>

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