

Building the Modern CFO Profile:

Lessons From Laurence A. Tosi on Identifying & Recruiting World-Class CFO Talent

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Few leaders have influenced modern finance and company-building as profoundly as Laurence A. Tosi (also known as “L.T.”).

Over a 25-year career, he has held pivotal roles shaping growth and innovation at some of the world's most transformative organizations.

As former COO of Merrill Lynch, CFO of Blackstone and Airbnb, and now Managing Partner and Founder of WestCap, he's been the financial architect behind some of the most important growth stories of the last two decades.

Sitting down with L.T. is the kind of conversation that prompts a deep reassessment of how leadership teams are built.

In a recent discussion, L.T. shared his perspective on what defines a great CFO today and why the traditional playbook no longer applies. The role has evolved from financial steward to strategic operator, requiring a fundamentally different set of skills, instincts, and a new approach to recruiting the right talent.

Here's how every fund, founder, or CEO should rethink hiring this role today.

From Hunt Club's Financial Officer Practice



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Hunt Club's Financial Officer Practice helps companies of all sizes, stages, industries, and ownership structures align business objectives, challenges, and culture to recruit CFOs who deliver real impact. [Learn more at huntclub.com](https://huntclub.com)



Inside This CFO Playbook →

→ READINESS CURVE

Timing's everything. Determine when your business should hire a full-time CFO.

→ ROLE OF THE CFO

Set the stage. Understand the CFO's impact across the organization.

→ CFO ARCHETYPES & JOURNEY MAPS

Know your players. Pinpoint the archetype and progression that fit your company, growth objectives, and investor base.

→ CFOS IN GROWTH-STAGE COMPANIES

Zoom in. Understand what operating in rapid-scale mode requires from your CFO and senior team.

The CFO Readiness Curve

When should companies actually hire a CFO? Companies often wait too long—or move too early. And while the CFO needs of private equity and public companies are more clearly defined, it can be nuanced for growth companies based on stage and situation. L.T. breaks down a practical way to help guide the decision.

COMPANY STAGE	TRIGGER EVENT	WHO YOU ACTUALLY NEED
Seed – Series A	< \$5M revenue, early scale, cash management	Head of / VP of Finance
Series B	Raising capital, scaling burn, early M&A, establishing infrastructure (reporting, budget, forecasting)	VP of Finance or CFO (Most VC-backed companies hire a CFO after a Series B)
Series C	\$20–\$50M revenue; scaling growth, increasing complexity	Strategic, externally-facing CFO familiar with M&A, debt and equity markets
Series D+ /Pre-IPO	Increasing operational complexity; need for strategic cross-functional decision support	Seasoned, public-ready CFO familiar with M&A, debt and equity markets
VC to PE Ownership Transition	Early-stage investors need liquidity and the company requires fresh capital for growth	Operational and strategic CFO to drive towards profitable growth

THE KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **Early missteps compound risk.** Delaying a CFO hire when your business is compounding means penalizing your execution muscle. However, hiring too far ahead of your needs could result in eventual new hire dissatisfaction and unwanted CFO turnover.
- **Revenue is just the tip of the iceberg.** Underlying factors and business complexities provide more insightful indicators for when to hire a CFO. For example, single-product to multi-product led growth and new market expansion often drive new funding needs. Additionally, more senior team building requirements are generally strong predictors of compounding business complexity that requires investment in senior CFO leadership.

The Role of the CFO

Today’s CFOs have transcended traditional finance roles, stepping into leadership positions that demand strategic thinking, operational depth, and cross-functional influence. L.T. lays out a clear matrix of modern CFO responsibilities and a helpful framework for what the role truly requires today.

	ACCOUNTING	FINANCE	STRATEGIC FINANCE
Function	Accuracy	Decision Support	Value Creation
Skill	Consistent	Transparent	Insightful
Platform	Ledger	Reporting	Informing
People	CPA	MBA	CFO / “CXO”
Impact	Control	Inform	Enable

The traditional CFO scope is evolving. Modern CFOs must also possess skills outside of finance.

GROWTH FOCUS

From accounting to value creation. Modern CFOs are taking on broader operational responsibilities, often overlapping with the COO role.

HARNESS TECHNOLOGY

Increasingly responsible for evaluating AI-driven tools and leading strategic technology investments.

ESG & STAKEHOLDERS

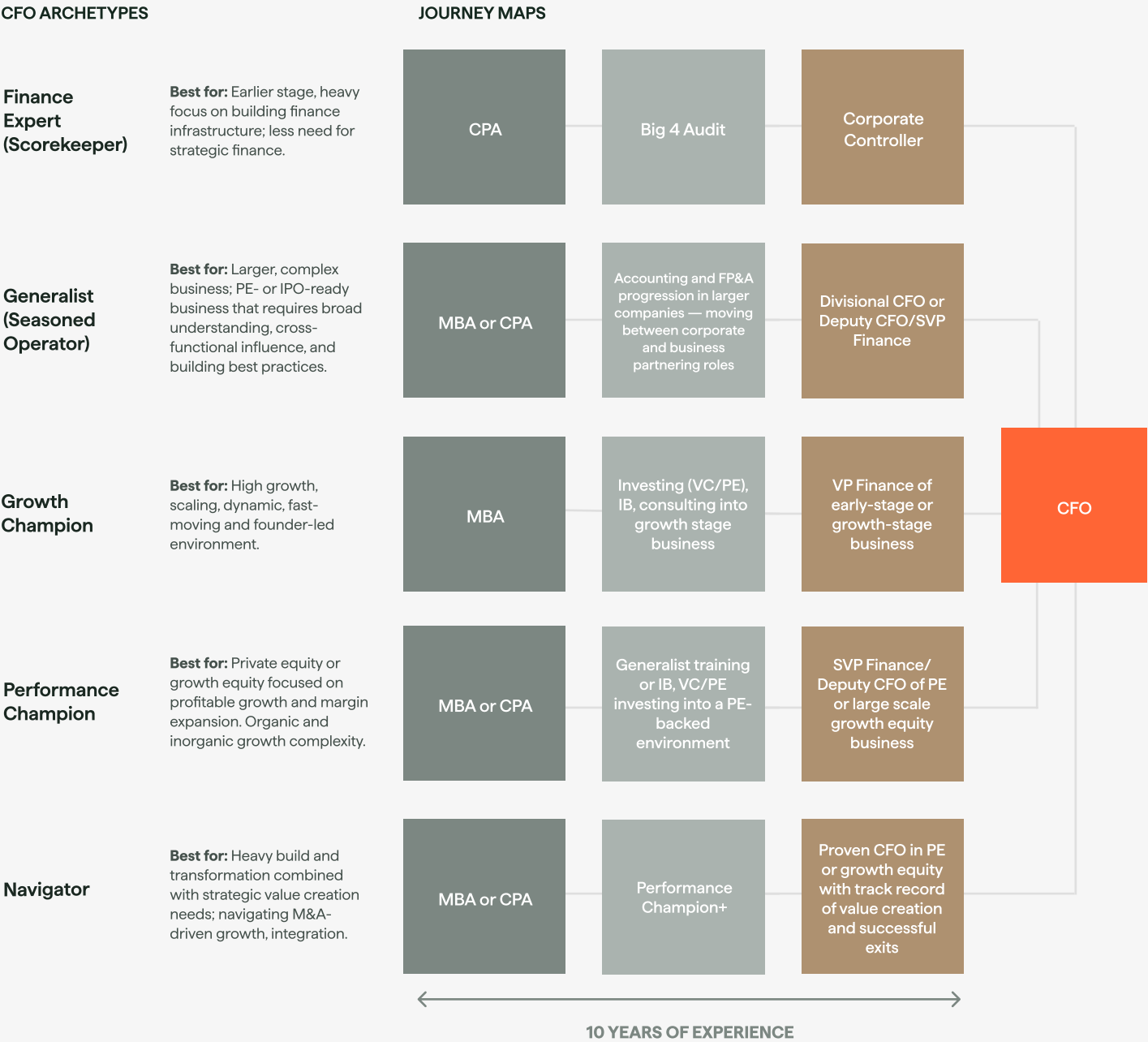
Integrates sustainability into operations and delivers clear, credible reporting to stakeholders.

PEOPLE FOCUS

Builds diverse, cross-functional teams that include emerging roles such as data scientists and AI engineers.

CFO Archetypes & Illustrative Journey Maps

One of the most common—and costly—mistakes companies make is hiring the wrong kind of CFO. Not “wrong” in skills or experience, but mismatched to what the business truly needs for its stage, complexity, and growth trajectory. Here’s a simple framework to understand the main CFO archetypes and their journey maps. Keep in mind these are general guidelines, not hard rules. Every company is unique, and real-world scenarios may blend elements from multiple archetypes.



THE KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- **No single archetype fits every stage or scenario.** The right CFO for a pre-IPO scale-up is rarely the same for a turnaround or a profitability push. Recognizing the preferred archetype increases (but does not always guarantee) prospects for a successful hire.
- **Alignment beats pedigree.** A “big name” hire can still fall short if their experience doesn’t map to your company’s specific challenges. The most common misstep is not appropriately embracing the operating maturity of your organization and/or the associated infrastructure-building needed to professionalize and grow.
- **Needs will evolve quickly.** An archetype that’s perfect today may need to change tomorrow as your business matures. The average tenure for CFOs hovers around 4 to 5 years, so build talent density and succession planning into your talent acquisition and retention roadmap.

CFOs in Growth-Stage Companies

The CFO role in a growth-stage company often looks very different from that of an early startup or a mature enterprise. At this stage, finance leaders take on a far more impactful role as operators, builders, and strategic partners to the CEO. To illustrate this shift, L.T. outlines the core competencies that distinguish growth-stage CFOs from their peers.

GROWTH CHAMPION

A growth-stage CFO is often the "Growth Champion" archetype. Well-suited for fast-moving, high-growth businesses where priorities shift quickly, they bring the ability to build structure amid change and keep the company financially agile as they evolve.

STRATEGIC FINANCE

Acts as a value creator by turning data into actionable insights that guide smarter decisions across the business. This growth-stage CFO helps the organization run more effectively by driving focus, alignment, and accountability.

REINVENT

Growth-stage CFOs act as an entrepreneurial catalyst and strategic partner. They help shape bold decisions, challenge legacy thinking, and foster a culture that embraces experimentation and continuous improvement.

GENERALIST REPLACEMENT

Replaces the generalist who managed the basics in the early stage. Note that this is not a 1:1 swap; this CFO brings the experience needed to scale operations, handle growing complexity, and get the company ready for fast growth and investor expectations.

Summary

Accessing and hiring the right CFO has never been more challenging. The role is evolving rapidly—demanding a mix of financial expertise, strategic vision, and operational agility—all while the pool of seasoned candidates is in high demand.

This playbook, featuring insights from L.T., breaks down the critical decision points and strategic considerations businesses face when evaluating their CFO capabilities through a thoughtful hiring process. From understanding when your business is ready for this pivotal hire to identifying the right archetype for your company's stage—this guide offers a practical framework for leadership teams. Special focus is given to growth-stage CFOs, who must balance operational rigor with entrepreneurial agility to drive sustained success.

Not sure how to hire your next CFO? Here's what to do next:

1

Clarify Your Needs Before You Start Your Search

Define what your business truly requires from a CFO at this moment, whether it's scaling operations, managing volatility, or driving strategic growth. Understanding your unique needs will help you target the right candidate profile and avoid costly mismatches.

2

Know Your Playing Field & Obstacles

Growth rarely comes without change. Carefully consider the challenges of driving change from all vantage points from people, culture, strategy, and execution. Finding the right balance of leadership style and experience in relevant environments and situations is key to a successful CFO hire.

3

Leverage Expert Partners to Navigate Complexity and Access Candidates

Consult a CFO specialist. Hunt Club's Financial Officer practice serves as a consultative partner to help solve your most complex leadership challenges. We combine deep market expertise with proprietary candidate data, purpose-built technology, an exclusive referral network to help you access and hire the right CFO.

ABOUT HUNT CLUB

Hunt Club is an executive search firm for pre- and post-IPO companies, private equity and venture capital firms, and their portfolio business leaders who require access to high-quality talent beyond the reach of typical recruiters.

By combining proprietary candidate data, a purpose-built technology platform, and an exclusive referral network, Hunt Club uncovers and provides access to the full talent market—including active, passive, and hidden candidates—enabling faster, more confident hiring of key leaders and teams without compromising on fit.

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