Scaling Through Uncertainty:

# Why Flexible Resourcing is Key

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**The last few years have fundamentally changed how finance leaders think about growth, cost, and workforce planning. The landscape is far less predictable as markets move faster, priorities change more frequently, and long-term workforce planning has become more challenging.**

For decades, the default approach was straightforward: hire when demand grows and reduce headcount when the market contracts. Yet as Phil Odella, Head of Finance and Service Delivery at **Prialto** explains, this model is becoming harder to sustain because businesses now operate in near-constant uncertainty, from geopolitical instability to erratic, rising costs, and of course, rapid technological development.

AI is a clear example of this shift. Its capability can improve productivity and unlock new efficiencies across finance and operations, yet it is also introducing a new layer of complexity that organizations must manage, oversee, and integrate into existing workflows.

As Prialto's 2025 Executive Productivity Report shows, while 78.35% of business leaders now use AI, only 26.38% say they fully trust it, meaning human management remains critical.[1]

"Organizations can no longer reliably predict the resources they will need in three, six, or 12 months' time, and what those resources are going to be doing, especially with the increasing pace of change in technology," says Odella.

For CFOs, this creates pressure from both directions. In 2025, 56% of global CFOs ranked enterprise-wide cost optimization as a top priority (source: Gartner)[2]. Yet they are expected to control costs while still supporting growth, transformation, and productivity.

It is prompting more organizations to start thinking differently about workforce structure instead of relying entirely on fixed internal teams. Outsourced administrative support is at the heart of this, with Prialto matching companies with virtual assistants to free executives from repetitive clerical work and scale support flexibly. The appeal lies not just in lower costs but in the ability to be agile without losing momentum.

Prialto's managed support model is designed around this principle. When client demand changes, resources can be reallocated internally rather than forcing businesses into repeated hiring and restructuring cycles. "We don't have to go through the churn of resources that can create a lot of time and energy drain for an organization," says Odella.

For finance leaders under pressure to do more with less budget, this flexibility is increasingly becoming a key tenet of resilience planning rather than a temporary fix.

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# Finance teams are carrying more weight with fewer resources

Finance teams are now expected to do far more than reporting and compliance: forecasting, planning, operational support, and strategic decision-making all sit under the same function, often with little or no increase in resources.

Indeed, Gartner's 2026 benchmarks show HR budget growth dropping to 0.7%, down from 2.4% in 2025, with more CFOs planning cuts than increases (source: Gartner)[3]. Hiring is slowing, even as workload grows.

Odella says one of the most common reactions during periods of cost pressure is to reduce clerical support first because these roles don't directly generate revenue. Yet in practice, this work is critical, and these responsibilities only add to the burden on more strategic employees. "You end up having people sub-optimized at the time you're trying to streamline. The highest impact employees end up doing more of the administrative work."

Finance teams feel overstretched as immediate operational tasks, such as approving invoices, processing payroll, coordinating calendars, and reviewing expenses, still need to be completed. And as workload increases, more strategic, time-intensive work tends to be neglected. "Businesses focus on the daily 'keep-the-lights-on' necessities and, as a consequence, they start to lose a little bit of capacity for longer-range planning," says Odella.

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**Phil Odella**
**Head of Finance and Service Delivery, Prialto**

Vital tasks often neglected are:

- **Strategic planning**
- **Competitive analysis**
- **Forecasting**
- **Forward-looking decision-making**

Matthew Collins, Engagement Manager at Prialto, sees a similar pattern. “CFOs are constantly getting pulled in a hundred different directions, switching between strategic priorities and repetitive operational tasks.”

At a senior level, those interruptions carry a disproportionate cost. Prialto often works with finance teams on recurring operational workflows such as expense management and quarterly reporting preparation, and this is where CFOs most successfully leverage its managed service.

“For example, we can very clearly lay out that process and say, this is due at the end of every week or every month or every quarter, and that team can work towards producing those reports or getting data into a position where it can run very smoothly,” says Collins.

Virtual assistants also relieve CFOs and their teams of a range of daily administrative duties, including:

- **Managing calendars**
- **Preparing agendas**
- **Scheduling appointments**
- **Managing inboxes**
- **Data entry**
- **Prioritizing and executing tasks**

The value lies not just in reducing workload but in protecting the time and focus of senior finance talent, enabling them to concentrate on the work they are qualified to do.

# The workforce model has already changed – finance needs to catch up

The wider workforce model has already changed in recent years, with remote work, distributed teams, and flexible support structures becoming the norm. The pandemic accelerated organizations' acceptance of global collaboration and remote execution, permanently shifting expectations.

Consequently, businesses have become more comfortable operating with flexible external support, fuelling the rise of the gig economy. But both Odella and Collins make an important distinction between gig work and a managed support model.

Collins says Prialto sits somewhere between the two. "We're very flexible in terms of understanding that people don't need full-time assistance to help and support them, but we approach it from a very traditional working arrangement, bringing our own best practices and our own tech stack."

It is an important distinction because many businesses are discovering the downsides of unmanaged freelance models. Odella says organizations often appreciate the flexibility of gig-style labor but struggle with the lack of continuity.

"Employers are starting to see the overheads associated with the churn from the gig economy and the inconsistency in performance."

Freelancers may provide short-term capacity, but they are hard to scale and can also create operational instability. "Businesses find a strong individual and the next day they're gone," says Odella. Prialto's model is designed to avoid this. "We have employees, not contractors or gig workers."

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# Headline

Venture capital firm, Headline originally relied on in-house assistants, but the model proved inefficient because many executives did not require full-time support, while a high turnover rate created constant hiring and onboarding demands. After moving to Prialto's managed support model, the company scaled remote assistant support to 18 executives while reducing operational overhead and improving continuity.

PAs learn executives' preferences and priorities and organize their inboxes and calendars to focus on what matters most. "We now have a playbook," says Jett Fein, Partner at Headline. "My PA responds for me–he knows what needs my attention, what to schedule, and what to delete. The peace of mind is invaluable because I can focus on higher priorities." Headline is now saving 990 hours a month of executives' time.

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**Jett Fein**
**Partner, Headline**

This reliability is increasingly valuable in an environment where hiring itself has become more difficult. As Collins says, many companies are overwhelmed by the recruitment process. "If you're opening a position with remote abilities, you're getting hundreds, if not thousands, of applicants for a single position."

For CFOs already grappling with operational and strategic demands, outsourcing the staffing and management process itself can remove another layer of complexity. This enables a workforce model that offers flexibility without the instability often associated with freelance marketplaces.

In short, gig work might deliver flexibility and short-term cost savings, but Prialto's managed service model also guarantees quality, reliability, and continuity, which ultimately translates into long-term productivity gains.

# Traditional options create unattractive trade-offs

Traditional hiring also creates continuity but can become difficult to scale as priorities shift, while freelance support offers agility but often requires significant oversight. And while basic virtual assistant services may reduce workload, internal teams often still have to manage recruitment, training, and process management.

As Odella says, “Our model addresses the fear of churn people associate with the gig economy, while we’ve also gone to great pains to reassure people about security when dealing with overseas resources.”

This is where managed infrastructure becomes critical. Prialto has built formal systems around security, continuity, and quality management, including SOC 2 Type II compliance.

Any reservations about the caliber of virtual assistants are also allayed. Engagement managers supervise assistants and provide ongoing training, continuously optimizing processes and workflows as they get to know each organization.

As Collins says, “The people we work with already have incredible talent and experience and are then very well trained by us, so we are able to quickly overcome any concerns. Companies are more and more open to connecting with overseas workers, and the bar has been raised.”

Leading companies are already putting any misconceptions to bed, with major banks and venture capital firms now replacing multiple administrative layers with offshore support models. It is no longer experimental for many; it’s a deliberate cost and efficiency strategy.

As Collins says, “Increasingly, companies aren’t looking at outsourcing as an option only in times of economic hardship but to build a labor force that is regenerative, allowing them to scale more easily as needs change.”

# Virtual assistants work when they're managed as an extension of the team

Many organizations have learned that hiring specialist resources remotely doesn't always equal productivity. Without structure, delegation can quickly become another management burden.

The managed service layer enables greater value to be delivered by going beyond the one-to-one relationship with the VA through shared processes, cross-training, and operational oversight.

Deloitte reports that 49% of CFOs are prioritizing automation to free up time for higher-value work,[4] but automation only delivers value when the underlying workflows are stable, documented, and consistently executed.

A managed virtual assistant model addresses that challenge directly:

- **Work is systemized, not dependent on one individual**
- **It provides built-in oversight, training, and continuity**
- **Global talent is integrated into workflows, not bolted on**

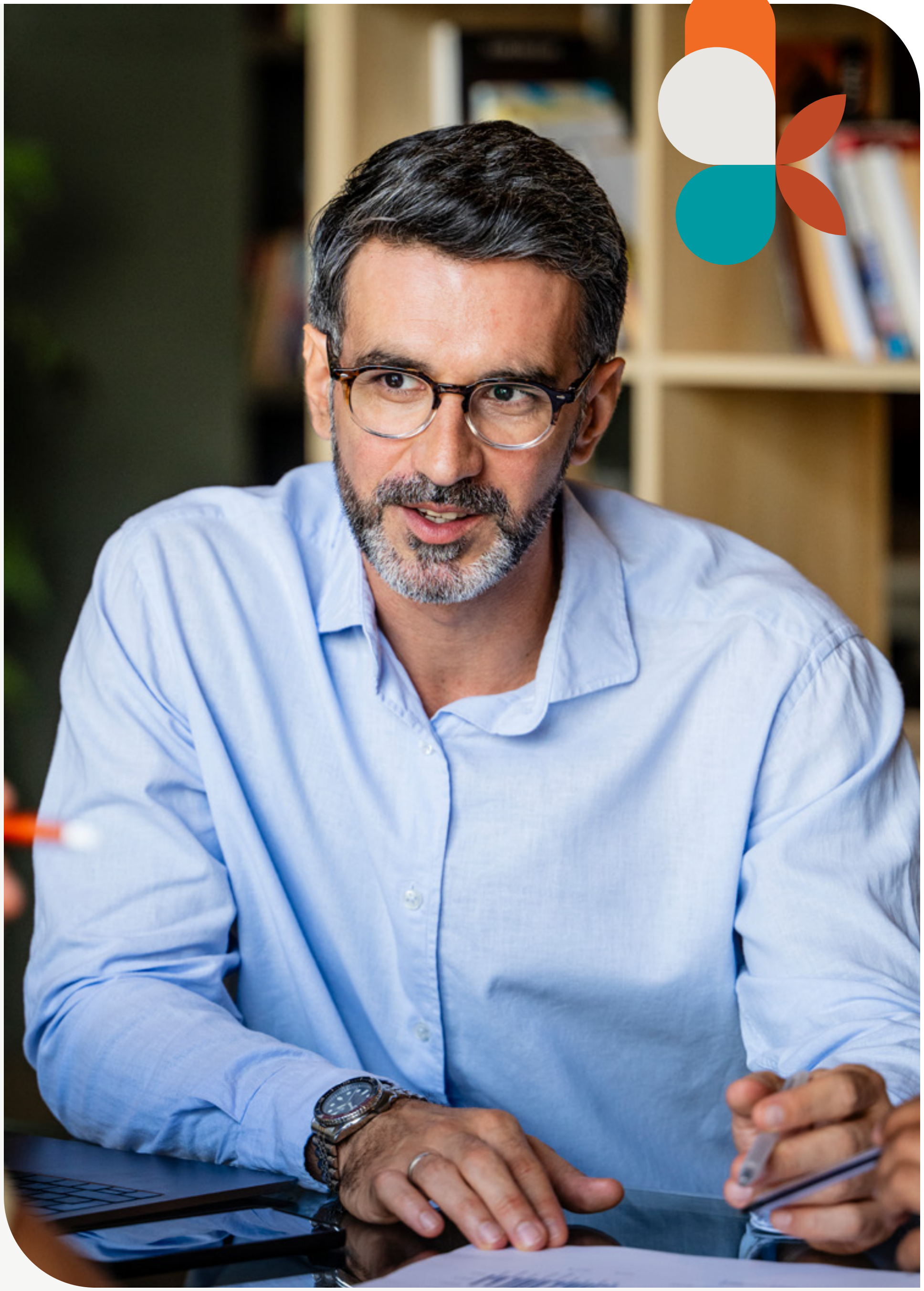
Collins cites one of the biggest practical advantages: "If there is any turnover, we are able to re-staff within a week to two weeks and avoid any productivity gaps."

Companies often underestimate how much time and money is lost replacing staff, rebuilding processes, and redistributing work internally. A Gallup survey in the US in 2024 estimates that the replacement of leaders and managers costs around 200% of their salary, while replacing professionals in technical roles is 80%, and replacing frontline employees 40%.[5] A managed model reduces both cost and disruption through stability and structured delivery.

Crucially, it also helps to address a common risk inherent in delegating. “The biggest challenge is when a CFO wants to just dump everything and assume someone can pick it up,” says Odella. “Early engagement and scope management are the key pieces.”

This transforms offshore support into a strength rather than an uncertainty. Companies are seeking not just lower-cost labor but reliable execution capacity that can flex with the business without creating additional operational complexity.

For CFOs, that is the difference between delegation that reduces pressure and delegation that creates more work.



# The real benefit: cost and capacity are aligned

The biggest advantage of a managed virtual assistant model is the ability to align cost with operational demand.

In practical terms, organizations can:

- **Scale up support when workload increases**
- **Scale down support without restructuring or redundancy risk**
- **Track hours cumulatively, giving day-to-day and week-to-week adaptability**

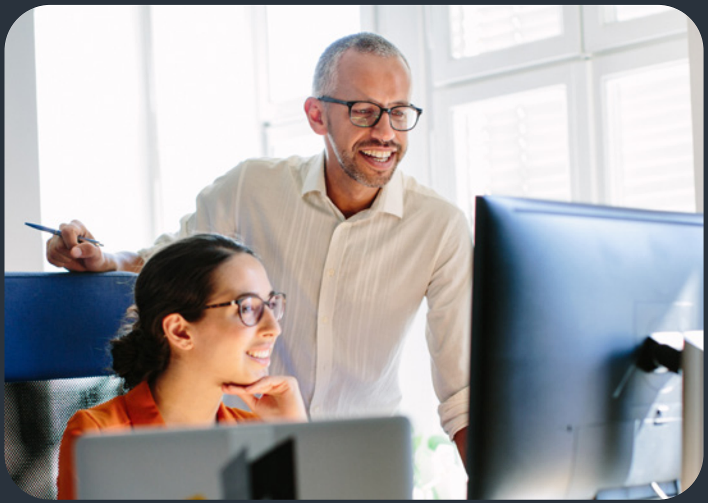
For finance leaders operating in uncertain markets, such flexibility is key. Odella describes it as “the Holy Grail” for CFOs: finding “efficiency gains” and “productivity gains” while minimizing the amount of investment they have to lock in.

Much of the pressure falls on repeatable operational work that can be delegated more efficiently, such as expense processing and reporting, workflow coordination and approvals, and document presentation management.

## _underscore.vc

Prialto client, Underscore VC is one company already reaping the benefits of a managed VA model. The organization uses managed support for inbox management, scheduling, investor coordination and expense handling, helping partners reduce administrative load while maintaining responsiveness across high-volume workflows.

James Orsillo, Partner and Chief Financial and Operating Officer at Underscore VC, says, “People were so used to doing administrative tasks themselves, we initially had to train ourselves to delegate to the PAs. But now that they’ve seen their productivity rise, the value is clear.”



As Collins says, the compounding effects of senior finance staff handling their own administrative tasks can be substantial: “If you’re earning $300k a year and doing your own administration for 10 hours a week, over the course of a year, you’re throwing away hundreds of thousands of dollars by not delegating.”

The cost is not just financial but strategic. Senior finance professionals become waylaid by reactive work rather than focusing on forecasting, planning, commercial analysis, and long-term decision-making. In short, strategic thinking is precluded by day-to-day maintenance.

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# Conclusion

## Operational resilience is more critical than ever in today's volatile world.

Forward-thinking finance leaders are already adapting by blending full-time teams with flexible execution layers that can adjust according to demand. They're treating capacity as an asset that can be scaled, not something that has to be locked in.

Increasingly, these execution layers are global, process-driven, and supported by managed service models. The goal is not just cost reduction but creating a finance function that has the speed and agility to thrive in uncertain times without incurring unnecessary risk.

And while AI, automation, and digital tools can improve pace and efficiency, they can't compensate for poor processes, inconsistent execution, or badly supported teams. Visionary organizations understand that productivity does not come from technology alone, but from integrating the right people, processes, and systems at scale.

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Prialto is the world's leading subscription-based managed virtual assistant service provider. Headquartered in Portland, Oregon, we deliver professional executive and administrative assistant services for a flat monthly fee, connecting businesses around the world with the most talented remote assistants in the industry. We handle a wide range of administrative functions, including calendar and email management, expenses, travel management, sales support, data entry, task management, and more. Prialto exists to positively amplify people, from every executive who uses our service to every employee who delivers it.

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