




Nature vs. Nurture: **What Makes a High-Impact CFO?**

As the role of the CFO continues to evolve from financial steward to strategic business leader, the debate grows louder: **Are great CFOs born, or are they made?**

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What Makes a High-Impact CFO?

At **Conexus**, we believe it's both.

While innate qualities—such as resilience, analytical acumen, and executive presence—often set high-performing CFOs apart, the demands of the modern finance function require much more. It takes a combination of natural ability and intentional development, diverse experiences, and hands-on operational leadership to truly excel in the role.

To meet these evolving demands, Conexus has launched a specialized Operational Advisory Practice led by seasoned professionals, many of whom bring experience from top Big 4 advisory and audit firms. Our team works alongside CFOs to tackle complex and high-stakes challenges, including:

- Mergers and acquisitions
- Divestitures
- Technical accounting pronouncement adoption
- IPO readiness
- Business process automation

In the last 12 months alone, Conexus has deployed over **400 CPAs and MBAs** to address critical talent and project needs—and has completed more than **200 executive searches** across the Office of the CFO. This gives us unmatched visibility into what truly defines a high-impact finance leader.

After conducting dozens of conversations on this topic with CEOs and private equity groups—and analyzing the performance of our most successful CFO placements—**seven core competencies** consistently rise to the top.

The Core Competencies of a High-Impact CFO

1. Strategic Leadership

The modern CFO is a strategic partner—helping shape the company's direction, drive growth, and evolve the business model. They're no longer just managing the numbers—they're influencing the future.

2. Operational Expertise

In mid-market environments, CFOs must bring hands-on experience managing budgeting, forecasting, and working capital to improve both EBITDA and cash flow.

3. Private Equity Acumen

In PE-backed companies, CFOs must have a strong grasp of investor relations, M&A, capital structure, and value creation strategies—while managing reporting and debt compliance with precision.

4. Technology Fluency

High-impact CFOs embrace digital tools, from AI and data analytics to modern ERP systems, using them to drive insight, efficiency, and smarter decision-making.

5. Crisis & Change Management

Whether navigating economic turbulence or leading through rapid growth, successful CFOs remain calm, adaptive, and decisive under pressure.

6. Cross-Functional Collaboration

A great CFO breaks down silos and works seamlessly across HR, IT, legal, and operations—ensuring financial goals are aligned with enterprise-wide priorities.

7. Communication & Storytelling

Numbers matter—but the ability to translate financial insights into clear, compelling narratives for boards, investors, and employees is what creates real influence.



Conexus is the **largest executive consulting and human capital firm headquartered in Southern California**, focused exclusively on supporting the Office of the CFO. We specialize in serving **growth-stage and mid-market companies (\$100M–\$500M in revenue)**—where CEOs and private equity sponsors are more aligned than ever on the attributes that define CFO success.

At **Conexus**, we are committed to **nurturing what makes a great CFO**.

By combining deep operational advisory expertise with proven talent strategy, we empower finance leaders who are not just keeping pace—but leading transformation.



STAY IN TOUCH WITH US



Irvine

5291 California Ave
Suite 310
Irvine, CA 92617
Phone: (949) 525-9802

Glendale

700 North Brand Blvd
Suite 420
Glendale, CA 91203
Phone: (213) 289-3500

Westchester

8616 La Tijera Blvd
Suite 309
Los Angeles, CA 90045
Phone: (213) 289-3500

Website

www.conexusrecruiting.com

E-mail

information@conexusrecruiting.com