

FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR BUSINESS:

How outsourcing can unlock better data, smarter planning, and stronger exits



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If you don't know where you're going - or worse, you're using the wrong map - how can you expect to get there?

That's what we see in so many growing businesses. People working hard. Making big decisions. But doing it with financial information that's out of date, patchy, or just not trusted. They're navigating by instinct, reacting after the fact, because they don't have clear, consistent, usable data.

Without that, strategic planning becomes guesswork.

We speak to business leaders every week who know they need better visibility. They want to plan ahead with confidence. But they're stuck in the day-to-day. There's no time and no headspace to build out proper forecasts or interrogate the numbers. That's where outsourcing helps; bringing structure, insight, and flexibility without the cost or commitment of building a full in-house team.

For many growing businesses, it's not about a lack of ambition, it's not that they don't want better visibility. It's that they may not know what "good" looks like, or don't have the time to build it. And it's not just about tidy books. The best outsourced teams bring Fractional FD-level thinking: they challenge assumptions, shape strategy, and work closely with your wider adviser team.

Whether you're preparing for growth or planning for exit, the quality of your financial data will shape both the journey and the outcome. At Menzies, we help businesses get the basics right, sharpen their forecasting, and turn the numbers into something useful.

This whitepaper explores what that looks like: how Outsourcing can give you clarity, help you move faster, and free you up to focus on what comes next.



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SECTION 1: GETTING THE FOUNDATIONS RIGHT

You can't build anything stable without solid foundations. In business, that foundation is your numbers.

The problem is, many businesses are planning with data that's patchy, delayed, or just not reliable. They're moving quickly, but can't see what's coming or where they're heading.

It's one of the most common frustrations we hear. Leaders want to be proactive, but 36% say they're held back by limited access to high-quality, accurate data [source: Menzies, [The Greatest Leap](#)]. And when you're not confident in the numbers, you delay decisions, rely on gut feel, or end up stuck in firefighting mode.

Outsourcing can help build that structure; giving businesses access to regular reporting, reconciliations, and financial control, without the need to build a team from scratch. In-house teams can do this well, but outsourcing offers a faster route when time or resource is tight.

WHY BETTER DATA POWERS BETTER DECISIONS



A good outsourced team keeps your month-end numbers accurate, reconciled, and ready, not just at year-end. You get management accounts you can actually use: timely, tailored, and reliable. That consistency means you're no longer steering while looking in the rear-view mirror. Instead, you're getting early visibility on what matters, cash pressure, falling margins, or late payments, so you can act before issues become problems.

It helps build a single source of truth: something that's easy to lose when systems are under pressure and data is split across teams or systems. Everyone can work from the same numbers, using the same reports, and making decisions from the same base. It takes the friction out of board conversations, shifting the focus from "what happened?" to "what do we do next?"

Paul Davies, CEO of Firstlight Group, put it well when describing their partnership with us:

"Menzies quickly adapted to our way of working rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all approach, while still bringing objective advice when strategic pivots were needed. Having their partnership means our team can focus on our clients, knowing we have a trusted financial foundation underneath us."

SECTION 2: PLANNING FOR GROWTH

Setting budgets, creating forecasts, and modelling scenarios

If you're planning a journey, you wouldn't set off without checking the weather or looking at a map. Yet that's effectively what many businesses do when they rely on fixed annual budgets or vague forecasts that haven't been reviewed since the start of the year.

A good forecast should work like a satnav: constantly recalibrating based on live data. That's where Outsourcing plays a key role. Instead of relying on a single budget set once a year, outsourced teams help keep forecasts rolling and scenario planning live. That consistency is hard to maintain internally when day-to-day demands take over.

It also opens the door to proper scenario planning. What happens if costs suddenly spike? If funding doesn't come through? Or if sales increase faster than expected and you need to scale? These aren't abstract exercises. With the right financial partner, you can model them in real time, so you're not surprised when those forks in the road appear.

This kind of planning is only useful when it's based on real operational drivers like customer acquisition, project milestones, or team capacity. That's what makes the numbers meaningful and actionable.

Still, 25% of mid-sized business leaders say poor forecasting and planning is a key barrier to growth [source: Menzies, [The Greatest Leap](#)]. That means one in four businesses are heading toward a goal without a clear view of what's coming next. In many cases, the data is already there; but without the time or experience to interpret it, it's not driving real decisions. That's where strategic financial partners come in. Good outsourced teams bring Fractional FD-level insight: challenging assumptions, linking forecasts to real business drivers, and helping you think a few steps ahead.

For Competition Fox, having Menzies as a partner helped them take that planning seriously.

"Menzies have supported us with more than just numbers – their team has been a vital sounding board as we've grown. Their breadth of financial knowledge has helped us navigate growth stages confidently, knowing our planning and decision-making were based on the right insights."

Martin McIver, Director

With the right forecast in place, growth doesn't have to be a gamble. It becomes something you can plan and deliver with confidence.



THE FORECASTING CYCLE

- Prepare forecast
- Live data
- Update actuals
- Update forecast
- Reforecast
- Adjust budget
- Model scenarios
- Take action

SECTION 3: REDUCING RISKS

Spotting financial and operational red flags early

You don't usually realise something's wrong until it's already costing you. Cash is tighter than expected. Payments are late. Margins have slipped, but the reporting delay means you've only just noticed. By the time the warning light flashes, the problem's already moving.

That's the reality for many businesses. Not because anything's fundamentally broken, but because they're not set up to catch small issues before they turn into costly ones.

David Staeuble, Finance Manager at Lakestar Advisors, puts it like this:

"The responsiveness of the Menzies team and their expertise have helped us navigate challenges and make meaningful progress. Having a trusted advisor that can address issues quickly and help us stay on course has been invaluable to keeping our projects moving forward."

That's what a strong outsourced finance team brings. Not just someone to process numbers, but someone who spots patterns, flags early warnings, asks the right questions, and identifies problems before they become a boardroom issue. A good outsourced team brings structure, rhythm and challenge, not just reporting the numbers, but helping spot patterns, question anomalies, and guide decisions. They can implement proper process mapping, helping you document and visualise existing workflows, pinpoint bottlenecks, inefficiencies and opportunities for automation or digitalisation.

Red flags like delayed invoicing, rising debtor days or inconsistent cost allocations may look small, but they're often early signs of something bigger. Left unaddressed, they affect cashflow, creditworthiness, and eventually, valuation.

Cashflow, in particular, is still a major pressure point. Our research shows 30% of mid-sized businesses see cash management as a key barrier to growth [source: Menzies, [The Greatest Leap](#)]. But it's often not about a lack of money; it's about a lack of visibility.

Outsourcing supports this by embedding consistent oversight, creating the space and rhythm to catch issues early. Over time, it builds the kind of financial discipline that investors, banks and boards expect.

SECTION 4:

FUTURE-PROOFING FOR EXIT

Building a business buyers want

Someone’s shown interest in buying the business. It’s not official yet, but they’ve asked for your numbers, and now you’re on the clock. That’s when many owners realise they’re not ready. Management accounts need cleaning up, forecasts aren’t reliable, and all operational processes are built around the owner.

That’s exactly the scenario we help businesses avoid.

Buyers want systems that run without constant intervention, financials that make sense without a long explanation, and forecasts that match reality. In short, they want a business that’s ready to go from day one.

That also means working with experienced advisers who know what buyers are looking for. People who can challenge assumptions, model outcomes, and work alongside legal and tax professionals to make the transition smoother.

Strong financial operations are the foundation of that. Outsourcing helps build them early, with up-to-date records and professionalised processes. That means you won’t be scrambling to clean up the numbers when interest starts brewing.

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Why sale-readiness isn’t optional

Too many business owners treat sale preparation as something they’ll deal with later. But if a buyer shows interest, you don’t get a six-month grace period to get your house in order. They want clean data, solid controls, and operational clarity almost instantly.

The truth is, every business should be run as if it might be sold tomorrow. That mindset also improves how the business runs day-to-day. Clean financials, strong cashflow discipline, formalised systems, documented processes. These are the things that make a business more resilient, more valuable, and easier to manage, whether you’re selling or not.

This is where a Fractional FD adds value. They don’t just report the numbers, they guide the journey to exit. And even if you’re not planning to sell, running in a sale-ready state means fewer surprises when you need to raise capital, bring in leadership or step back from day-to-day operations.

The power of destination planning

It’s simple. If you don’t know what outcome you’re working toward - sale, succession, management buy out, investment - you can’t align your systems, people or reporting to support it.

Destination planning means asking:

- Who’s most likely to buy this business (or inherit it)?
- What will they want to see?
- What risks or inefficiencies will they walk away from?

Once that picture is clear, everything else becomes easier to align. Your finance team starts producing the kind of reporting a buyer would trust, forecasts become something investors can interrogate, and processes shift from being founder-led to team-driven.



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CHECKLIST: WHAT DOES “SALE-READY” LOOK LIKE?

Use this to sense-check how ready your business really is, whether you’re planning to exit or not.

01 Financial discipline

- Accurate, reconciled management accounts delivered monthly
- Fully documented accounting policies and controls
- No material gaps in tax, VAT or payroll compliance
- Year-end adjustments already built into monthly reporting

02 Forecasting and modelling

- Rolling 12-month forecast aligned to live operational data
- Modelling for key variables (e.g. sales, margin, FX)
- Working capital plans linked to growth assumptions
- Historic vs forecast tracking to validate assumptions

03 Operational readiness

- Key person risks identified and actively reduced
- Documented core processes (sales, billing, delivery, support)
- Contracts and licences centralised and up to date
- Legal structure optimised for sale or transition

04 Strategic clarity

- Defined exit options or timelines
- Value drivers understood and tracked
- Trusted advisors already engaged (legal, financial, tax)
- Financial systems capable of supporting due diligence quickly

SECTION 5: THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY

Linking financial and operational data

Most businesses don't suffer from a lack of data. They suffer from too much of it, and not enough connection between the parts that matter.

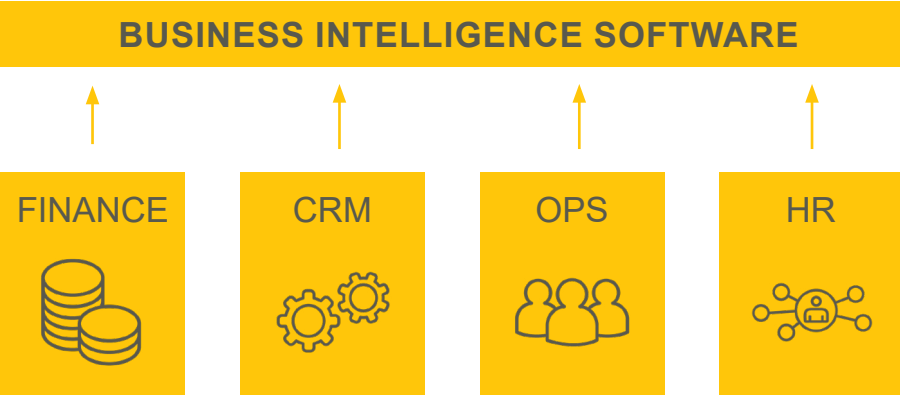
You've got financial reports in one system, operational KPIs in another, sales metrics in a spreadsheet, and marketing buried somewhere else entirely. That's why 36% of mid-sized businesses say disconnected systems are holding them back from making better decisions [source: Menzies, [The Greatest Leap](#)]. The information exists, but it's fragmented, inconsistent or too slow to act on.

True business insight comes when you can see all of that in one place.

At Menzies, we help clients integrate financial and operational data into live dashboards that guide daily and strategic decisions. Often that means using Business Intelligence Software to pull together finance, CRM, HR and operational data into one clear view. But the real impact isn't the tool; it's what it enables.

Most businesses have systems in place, but few are using them to their full potential. There are almost always missed opportunities for automation and efficiency. Many of these systems have been added over time to meet specific needs, often as "best of breed" solutions, but they tend to operate in silos, lacking integration and leading to duplicated tasks and manual data entry. What's often missing is the time to build effective reporting or the confidence to use it well. In many cases, the data is already there, but without the time or experience to make sense of it, it doesn't inform decisions.

That's where outsourced expertise brings real value: designing effective reporting from the start and continually refining it. Ultimately, it's the interpretation that matters, turning reports into meaningful insight and connecting data to action. Gone are the days of endless Excel manipulation. Put the right structure and reporting in place up front, and the systems work day to day, without the stress.



EXPERT INSIGHTS

Oliver Finch, Partner and Outsourcing Lead

Connecting the dots: Dashboards that drive decisions

We talk a lot about dashboards and real time reporting in finance, but what matters most is what they're connected to. A flashy interface with bad or disconnected data underneath won't help anyone.

At Menzies, we encourage dashboards and reporting that genuinely guides decisions. You should have one view of the business, with key metrics all in one place, not five spreadsheets telling five different stories.

When done right, it changes how people work. Connected apps can track performance live, rather than wait weeks after month-end. Operational teams can spot when something doesn't look right and act straight away. And business owners get their evenings back because they're not piecing together reports manually.

Technology should simplify, not overwhelm. We help clients design dashboards and reporting that show the right information to the right people, in the right format, whether that's a strategic view for leadership or a focused KPI set for the delivery team.

ARE YOU READY FOR WHAT'S NEXT?

Businesses with live, reliable financial insight make faster decisions, plan more effectively and exit with confidence.

The difference is visibility. With accurate, real-time numbers, and the systems to interpret them, you stay ahead of problems instead of reacting to them. Meaning when opportunity knocks, you're not playing catch-up. You're ready.

Outsourcing puts that kind of visibility within reach, bringing capacity, challenge and experience to make the most of the data you already have. Access to the experience and strategic challenge without the cost or complexity of building a full in-house team means fewer surprises, faster decisions, and more confidence in the path you're on.

Wherever you're heading, we can help you get there: **stronger, faster and better prepared.**

IS YOUR BUSINESS FUTURE-READY?

If you're thinking about growth, investment or exit, it's worth asking how ready your finance function really is.

Our team can work with you to:

- Review and design your financial reporting and systems
- Provide strategic finance leadership on a flexible, fractional basis
- Design and implement rolling forecasts and live dashboards
- Free up time and focus for your next phase
- Streamline and automate processes and tasks to improve efficiency and reduce costs

Get in touch with the Menzies Outsourcing team to take your next step.



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