



Accounts Payable Leaders' Priorities in 2025



INSTITUTE OF FINANCIAL
OPERATIONS & LEADERSHIP



Our Research

We are dedicated to conducting comprehensive and independent market research with our global community of members, students, and subscribers.

Our research uncovers valuable trends and insights which help provide authenticity for our resources, learning materials, and content.

At the core of our methodology is the meticulous collection of data, which serves as a rich resource for in-depth analysis and trend identification. By making our studies open to a wide audience, we aim to provide a holistic and accurate picture of finance operations, with a particular focus on accounts payable and P2P.

Our research topics are aligned with quarterly themes that reflect our overarching objectives. By doing so, we not only respond to the dynamic nature of the finance landscape but also provide our audience with real-world insights that directly address their concerns and interests.

Our research is referenced frequently across third-party global websites, further embedding our reputation for being a global thought leader in finance operations.

Our Community

Our global audience is a growing community of driven and dynamic finance professionals who are responsible for:



Driving and influencing change to finance processes



Developing and leading teams to meet the future needs of finance



Executive Summary

The role of accounts payable (AP) leaders is transforming. To better understand their priorities, challenges, and strategic focus for 2025, we conducted an independent global research study among finance and AP professionals. This research highlights the key goals for AP teams, identifies critical obstacles, and sheds light on how technology and leadership skills are shaping the future of the function.

Here are some of the key findings for 2025.

Top Priorities for Accounts Payable Leaders in 2025

Increasing Efficiency

For the second consecutive year, efficiency is flagged as the top priority in AP operations. Streamlining workflows and reducing manual tasks is paramount as teams aim to manage higher transaction volumes with the same or fewer resources. Leaders are prioritizing end-to-end process optimization to meet these demands without compromising accuracy or control.

Improving Reporting and Analytics

Rising to be the second priority, enhanced reporting and analytics capabilities are pivotal in enabling AP teams to deliver actionable insights to stakeholders. By leveraging data effectively, teams can improve decision-making, track performance, and strengthen vendor relationships. This focus underscores the need for tools that provide real-time visibility and advanced analytics.

Full Automation of Processes

Automation continues to be a game-changer for AP teams. Leaders are accelerating their push towards fully automated processes, aiming to minimize errors, reduce costs, and boost productivity. This trend highlights the growing reliance on technologies like AI and machine learning to achieve seamless invoice processing and vendor management.

Top Challenges Facing AP Teams in 2025

Training the Team to Meet the Latest Skills Requirements

As the AP landscape grows increasingly technical, upskilling employees is a critical challenge. Ensuring that teams have the skills needed to operate new tools and manage advanced processes is essential for maintaining competitiveness and achieving operational goals.

Mitigating Fraud and Cybersecurity Risks

Fraud prevention and cybersecurity are ever-present concerns for AP teams. The rise of sophisticated fraud schemes and cyber threats has made robust internal controls and fraud detection mechanisms indispensable.

Adapting to Rapid Technological Advances

The fast pace of technological innovation presents both opportunities and challenges. AP leaders must stay ahead by adopting new technologies while ensuring their teams can adapt and leverage these tools effectively.



Top Technology-Related Challenges in 2025

Integration Issues

Integrating new systems with existing platforms continues to be a major hurdle for AP teams. Seamless integration is essential for achieving efficiency gains, yet legacy systems often complicate the process.

User Training and Adoption

Even the most advanced technology is only as effective as the people using it. Ensuring that staff members are properly trained and confident in using new systems is a priority for AP leaders seeking to maximize their return on investment.

Legacy Systems and Outdated Software

Many organizations are still grappling with outdated systems that hinder progress. Upgrading to modern platforms is crucial, but the associated costs and complexities can delay these efforts.





Critical Leadership Skills for 2025

In the face of these challenges, the ability to drive innovation and organizational change is the most critical skill for AP leaders, as cited by 28% of respondents. Leaders must be adept at navigating complex environments, fostering collaboration, and implementing transformative strategies to future-proof their teams.

Investment Focus in 2025

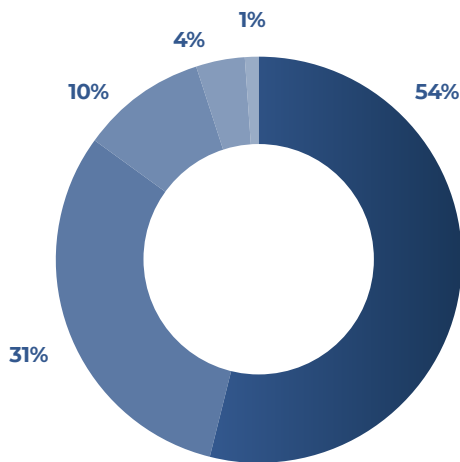
Digital transformation, automation, and AI integration are at the forefront of AP investment priorities, with 61% of respondents identifying these areas as key. This focus reflects the pressing need to modernize processes, enhance efficiency, and stay competitive in a tech-driven world.

Conclusion

The research underscores a pivotal moment for AP teams as they navigate a dynamic landscape in 2025. Efficiency, automation, and advanced analytics remain top priorities, while training, fraud prevention, and technology integration present ongoing challenges. To succeed, AP leaders must invest in digital transformation and cultivate the skills needed to adapt to change. With a focus on innovation and strategic investment, the future of accounts payable is poised for significant growth and evolution.

Research Insights

What do you consider to be your company's top priority for 2025?

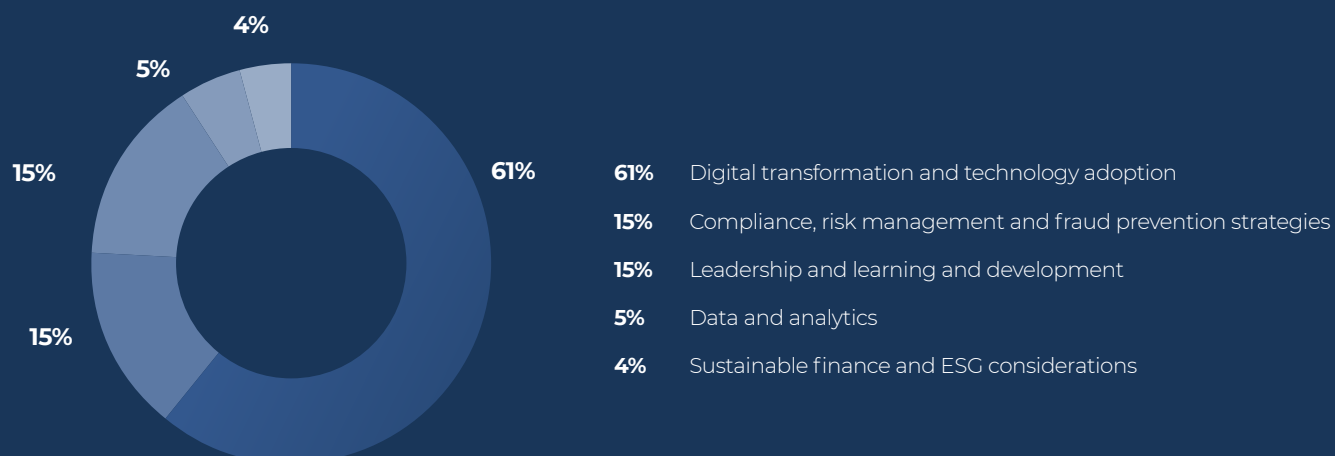


- 54%** Enhancing operational efficiency and cost management
- 31%** Driving revenue growth and profitability
- 10%** Strengthening risk management and compliance practices
- 4%** Expanding into new markets and customer segments
- 1%** New ERP system integration

Does your finance team have a clear strategy?



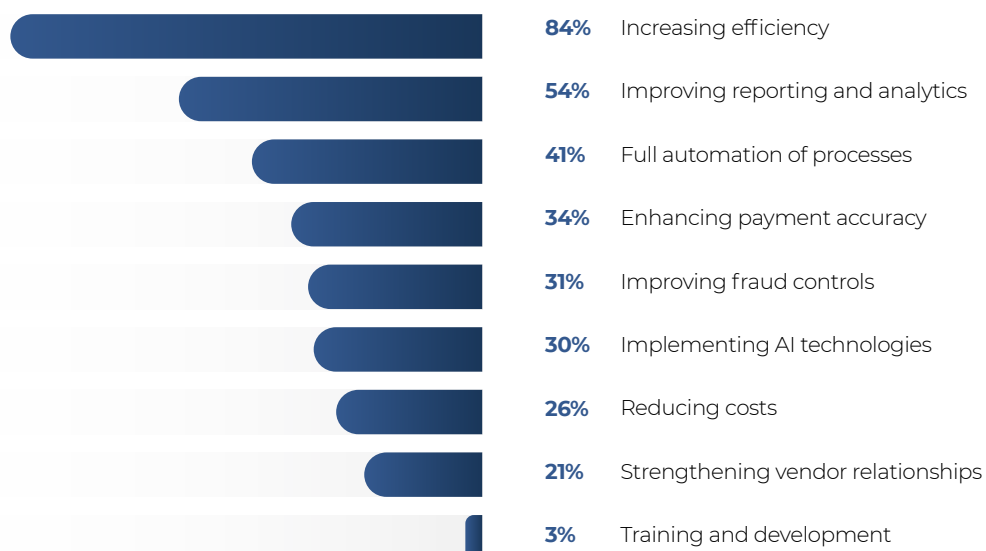
Which area do you believe will require the most investment and focus in your team in 2025?



What is the most critical leadership skill for finance leaders to possess in 2025?



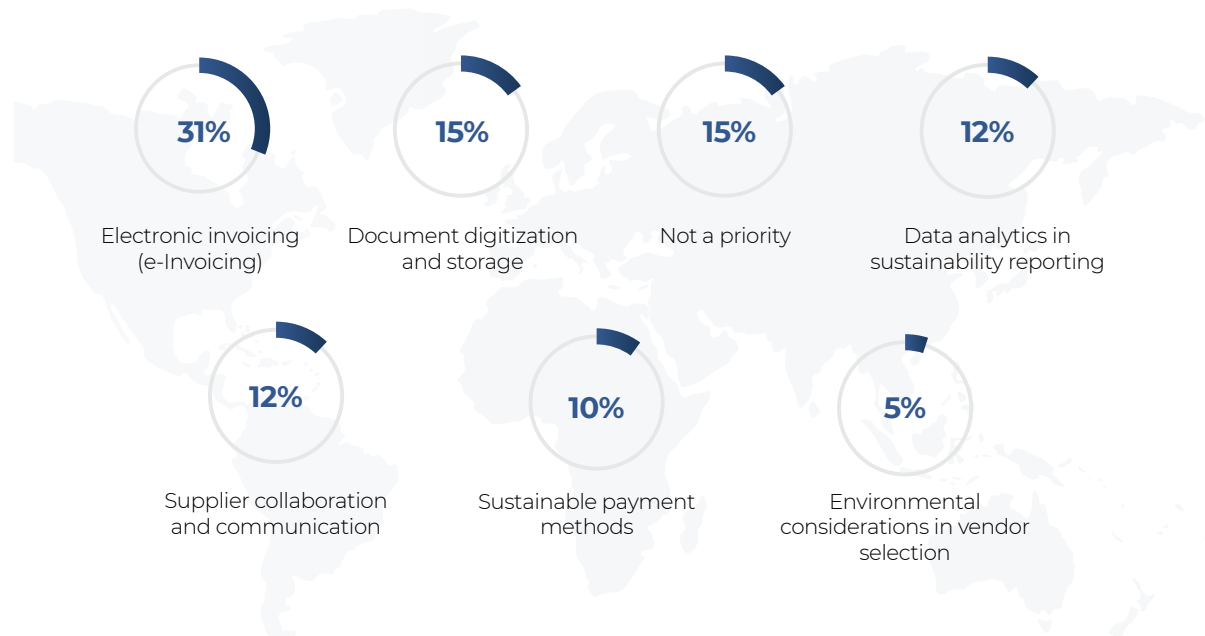
In 2025, what are your top three priorities for the accounts payable department?



Which three areas are you most likely to invest in to improve AP efficiency in 2025?



What is your primary approach to sustainability in AP processes for 2025?

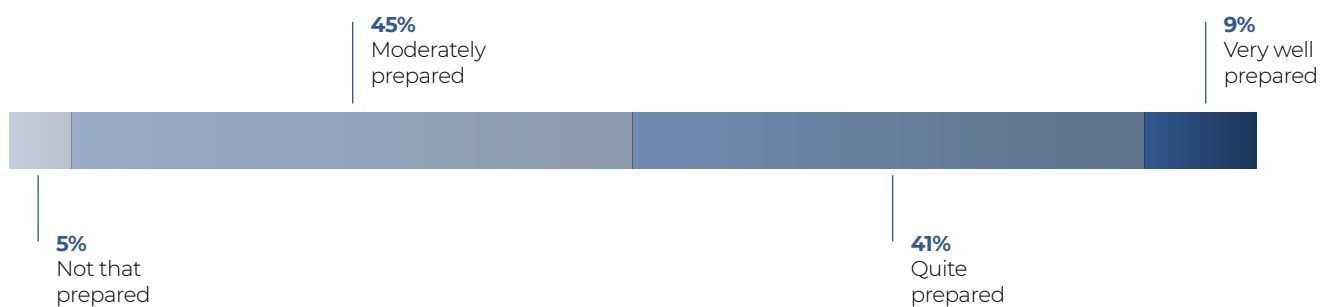


What are the top three AP challenges you anticipate in 2025?

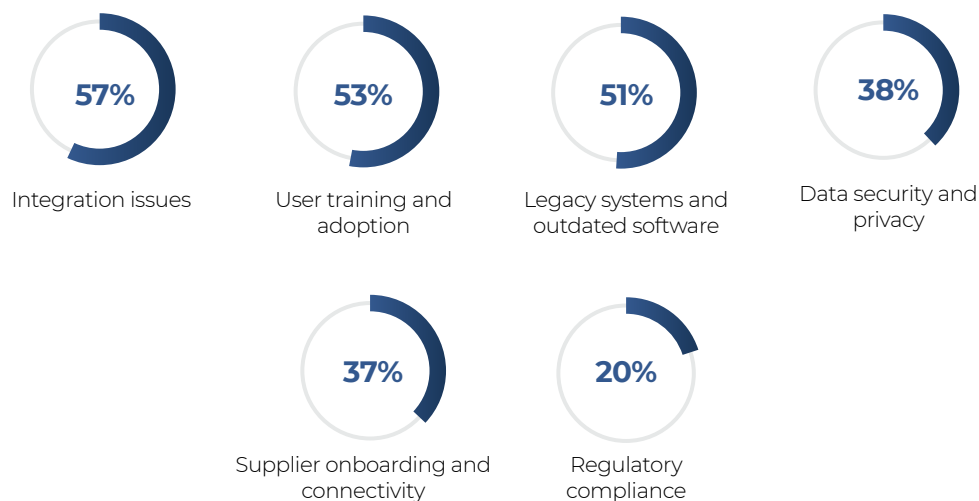




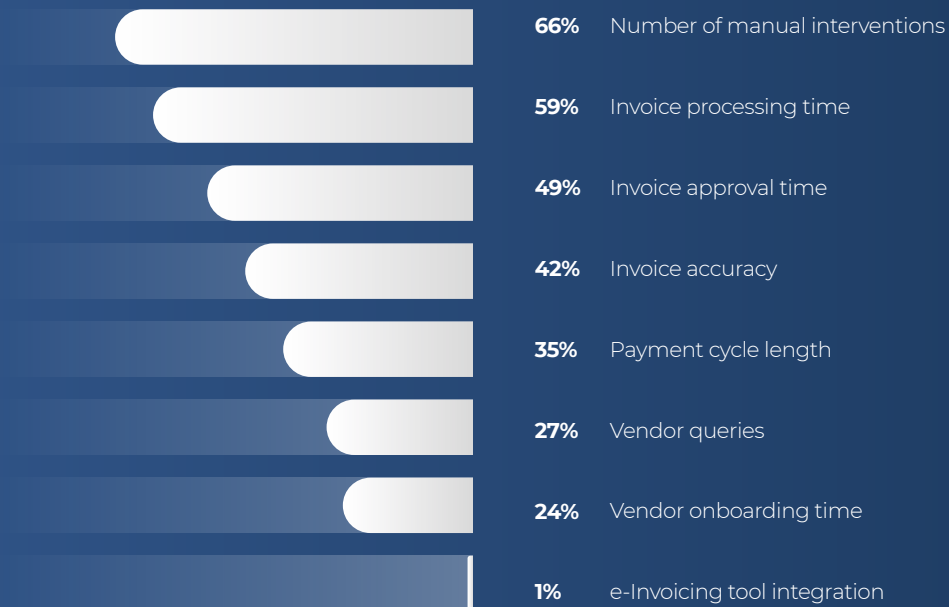
How prepared is your department to handle potential regulatory changes in 2025?



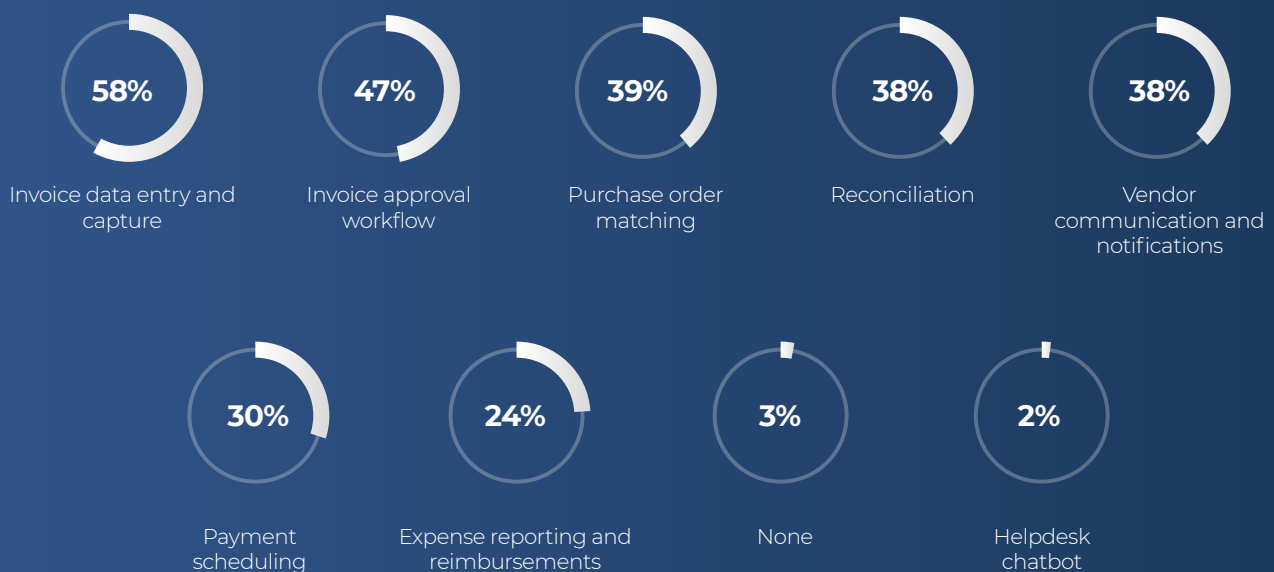
What are the top three technology-related challenges you expect to face in 2025?



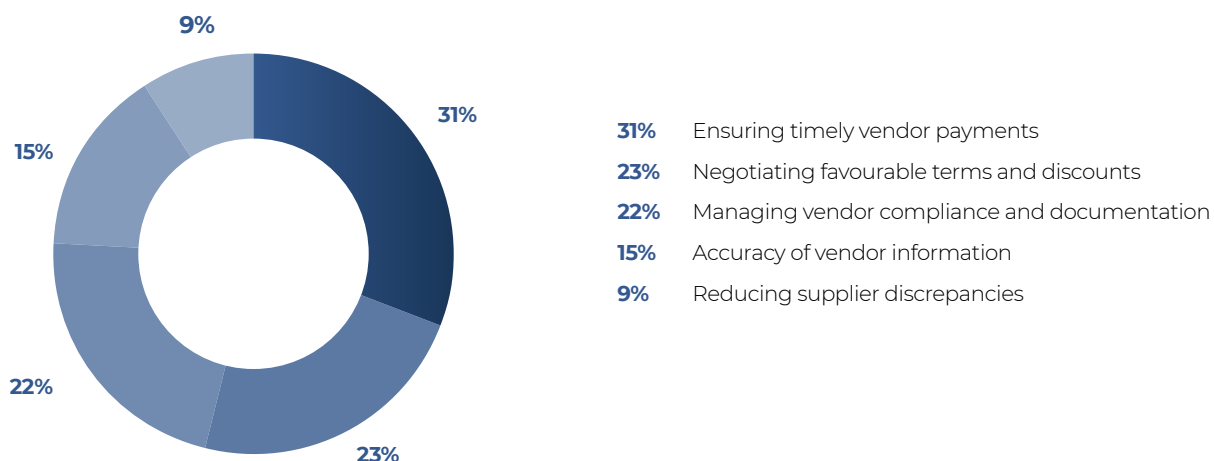
What three efficiency metrics are you looking to improve in 2025?



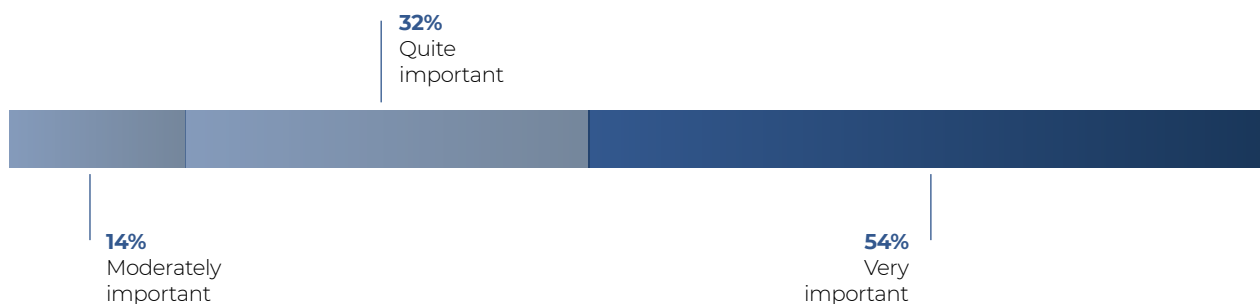
Which AP processes are you most likely to automate in 2025?



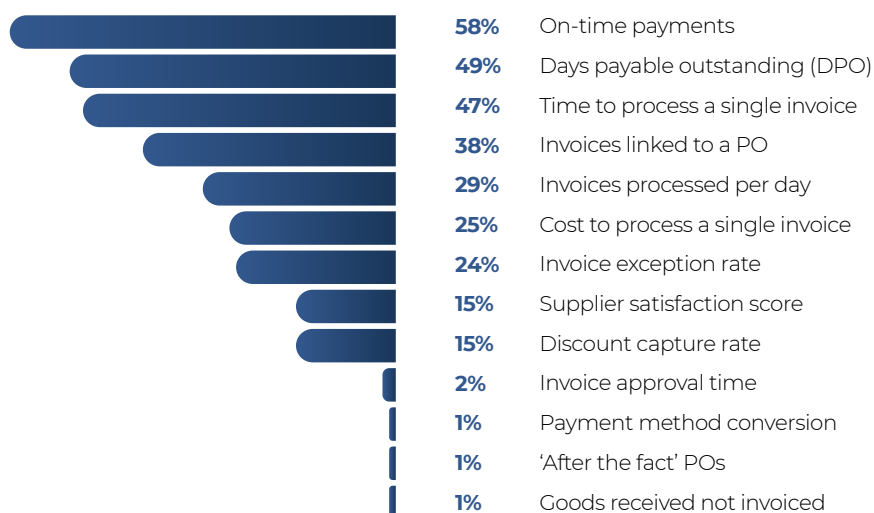
What is the biggest challenge you foresee in managing vendor relations in 2025?



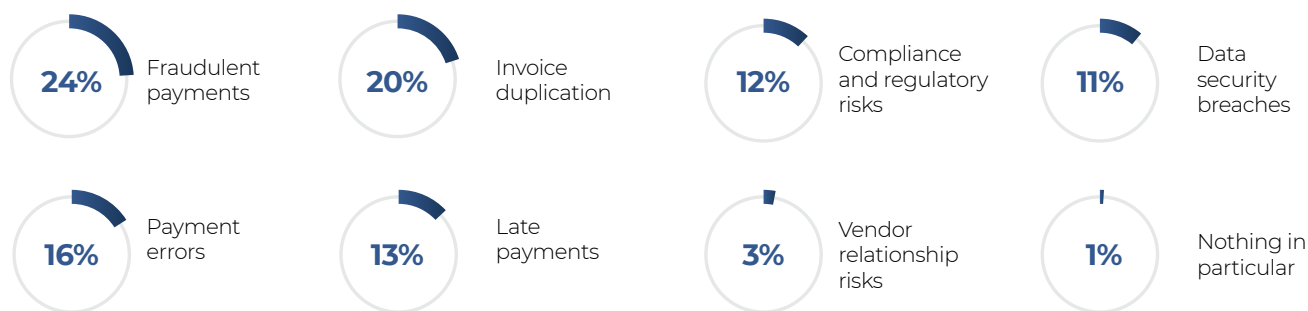
How important is data-driven decision-making for your AP department in 2025?



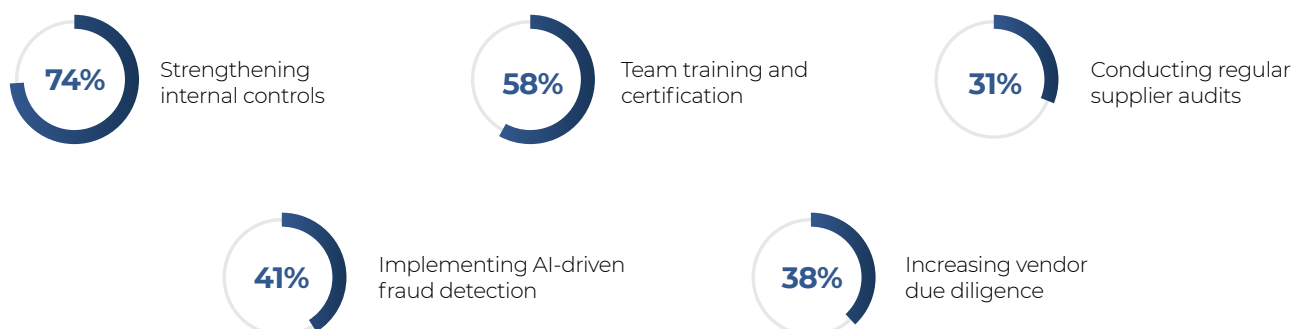
Which three key performance indicators (KPIs) will you track more closely in 2025?



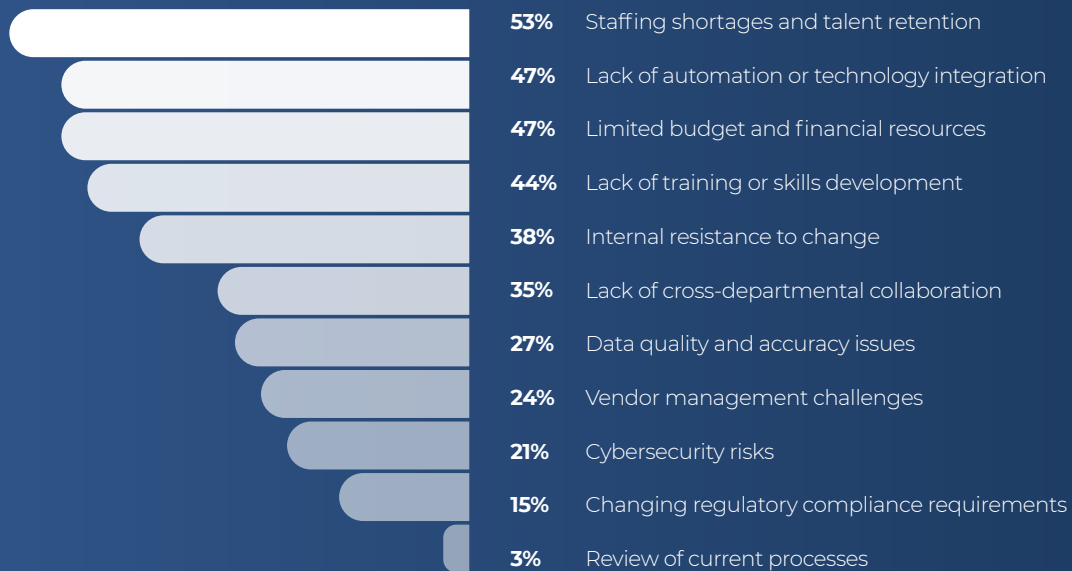
Which risk is of greatest concern to your AP operations in 2025?



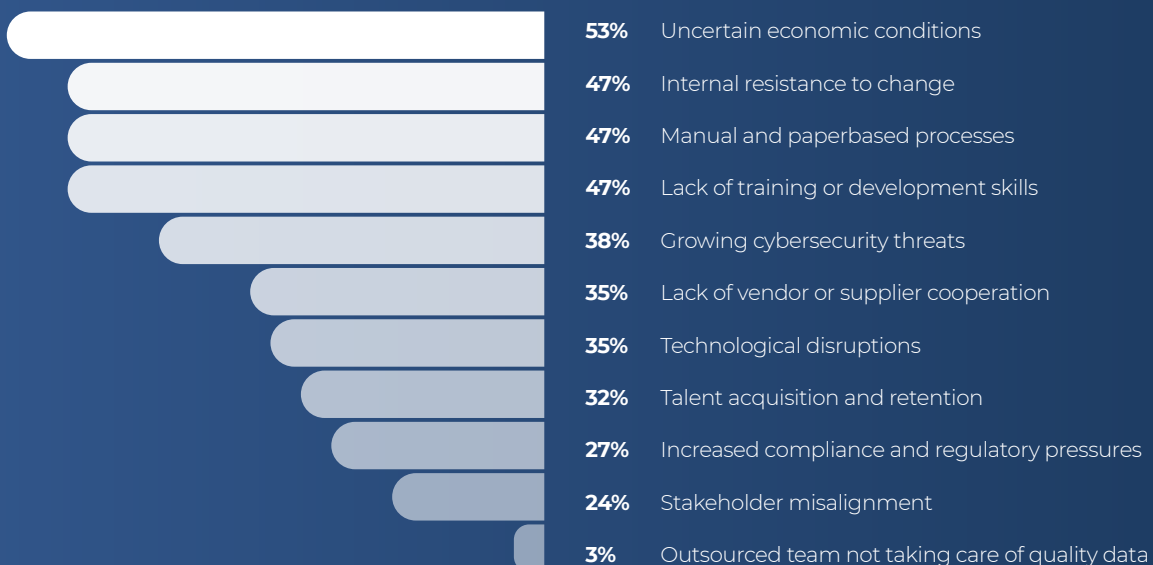
How are you planning to enhance your AP department's risk mitigation strategies in 2025?



What are the barriers to achieving your 2024 priorities?



What are the anticipated barriers to achieving your 2025 priorities?





Pro Tips from IFOL

Here are some pro tips from the IFOL education team to help address some of the key challenges highlighted in our research:

Boost Efficiency with Smart Automation

- ✓ Identify repetitive manual tasks and implement automation tools to reduce processing time and errors.
- ✓ Start with invoice processing and approvals - AI-powered automation can cut cycle times by up to 50%.

Strengthen Fraud Prevention with Multi-Layered Controls

- ✓ Use AI-driven fraud detection tools to flag suspicious transactions before they become costly issues.
- ✓ Regularly update internal controls and conduct vendor audits to prevent invoice fraud and phishing attacks.

Close the Skills Gap with Continuous Training

- ✓ Invest in ongoing professional development to keep teams up to date on the latest AP technology and compliance requirements.
- ✓ Consider certifications in accounts payable, P2P, finance operations, or fraud prevention to upskill employees efficiently.
- ✓ The IFOL membership program offers continual learning and development via webinars, training, short courses, and more.

Overcome Integration Challenges with a Strategic Approach

- ✓ Work with your IT department to ensure new AP automation tools integrate smoothly with your existing ERP and accounting systems.
- ✓ Prioritize platforms with open APIs and flexible configurations to reduce compatibility issues.

Future-Proof AP with a Digital-First Mindset

- ✓ Regularly assess your AP processes to identify areas where digital transformation can drive further efficiency.
- ✓ Stay informed about emerging technologies, like AI and blockchain, to keep your team ahead of industry shifts.

Achieve your AP goals in 2025 with IFOL

IFOL is here to help accounts payable teams stay ahead in 2025 with the right tools, knowledge, and support. Whether it's expert training, industry certifications, or practical resources, we've got finance professionals covered. Our webinars, research reports, and networking events bring AP leaders together to share insights, tackle challenges, and keep up with the latest trends. From boosting efficiency to fighting fraud and making the most of automation, IFOL provides the guidance and community AP teams need to succeed.

Find out more at www.acarp-edu.org

THE INSTITUTE OF FINANCIAL OPERATIONS AND LEADERSHIP

ABOUT US

Who we are

The Institute of Financial Operations and Leadership (IFOL) is an award-winning provider of education, support, and research to a global audience of Accounts Payable, Procure to Pay, Accounts Receivable, Order to Cash, and Payroll.

What we do

We provide training, certification and skills development to individuals and teams so they can grow as professionals, improve their performance and advance their careers in finance operations.

Our members

With over 30,000 active members and 7,000 students from over 14 countries who study with us each and every year, we offer over 15 courses and qualifications and help our students achieve a 99.8% first time pass rate.

Our community

Our growing online community of finance professionals are connected by mindset, not job title. Our global community is free and open to anyone. It offers resources, white papers and webinars for CPD, and the chance to network with like minded professionals.

Our events

We run a global conference program for our community and beyond, with annual events in the UK, US and Canada, designed for Finance Change Makers.

Our promise

"In an ever-changing environment, IFOL helps driven and dynamic finance operations professionals be more effective through industry-leading education, research, and training and development."

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