

AI FINANCE
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THE 2026 AI-POWERED

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS **HANDBOOK**

**From Disconnected Data
to Connected Insights**



Brought to you by NetSuite

About The Author

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Why NetSuite + AI

Finance teams using NetSuite are sitting on a goldmine of connected data. Transactions, customers, vendors, inventory, and forecasts all in one system. The challenge has never been the data itself. It's been getting insights out of it fast enough to act.



That's where AI changes everything.

Inside You'll Find:

- Ready-to-use prompts for every major business process.
- NetSuite's built-in AI features you may not be using yet (Bill Capture, Exception Management, SuiteAnalytics Assistant)
- MCP (Model Context Protocol) explained. How to connect Claude or ChatGPT directly to your data.
- Security frameworks to keep your data safe while using AI to its full potential
- A 30-day implementation roadmap to go from AI curious to connected data

Whether you're a CFO exploring what's possible or an analyst ready to automate the tedious parts of your job, this guide gives you practical steps you can take today.

Do you need NetSuite to use this Handbook?

No you don't, you will still get a lot of value from this guide no matter what system you use, but the native AI capability and MCP examples are NetSuite focused.

Let's get started.

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has become a core part of how finance teams work. What started as experimental tools for drafting emails has evolved into connected systems that can query live financial data and provide real-time insights.

But most finance professionals are still stuck copying data into spreadsheets, pasting it into AI tools, and hoping the results are accurate. It's slow, it creates security risks, and it doesn't scale.

This handbook bridges that gap. You'll learn how to move from manual, disconnected AI usage to secure, integrated workflows, where AI can query your live data and deliver answers in seconds rather than hours.

Whether you're new to AI or looking to deepen your skills, you'll find practical guidance you can use immediately.

What You'll Learn

The Finance Prompt Framework: A proven approach to writing prompts that get accurate, useful results. You'll understand why vague prompts fail and how to structure requests that deliver board-ready analysis.

AI + Connected Data: How to connect AI tools directly to your data using MCP (Model Context Protocol). This is the difference between AI that guesses and AI that knows.

Built-In AI Features: An overview of the AI tools already available inside NetSuite. Features like Bill Capture, Exception Management, and SuiteAnalytics Assistant that many teams aren't fully using.

Security and Governance: A clear framework for keeping your data safe while unlocking AI's potential. You'll know exactly what's safe to share and what stays internal.

Implementation Roadmap: A 30-day plan to move from AI-curious to fully connected, with specific milestones and success metrics.

How to Use This Guide

This handbook is designed for multiple entry points. Start where it makes sense for you:

If you want quick wins today: Jump to Chapter 1.2 to find ready-to-use prompts that work immediately with ChatGPT or Claude. No technical setup required.

If you want to understand connected AI: Go to Part 2 to learn how MCP bridges the gap between AI tools and your live data.

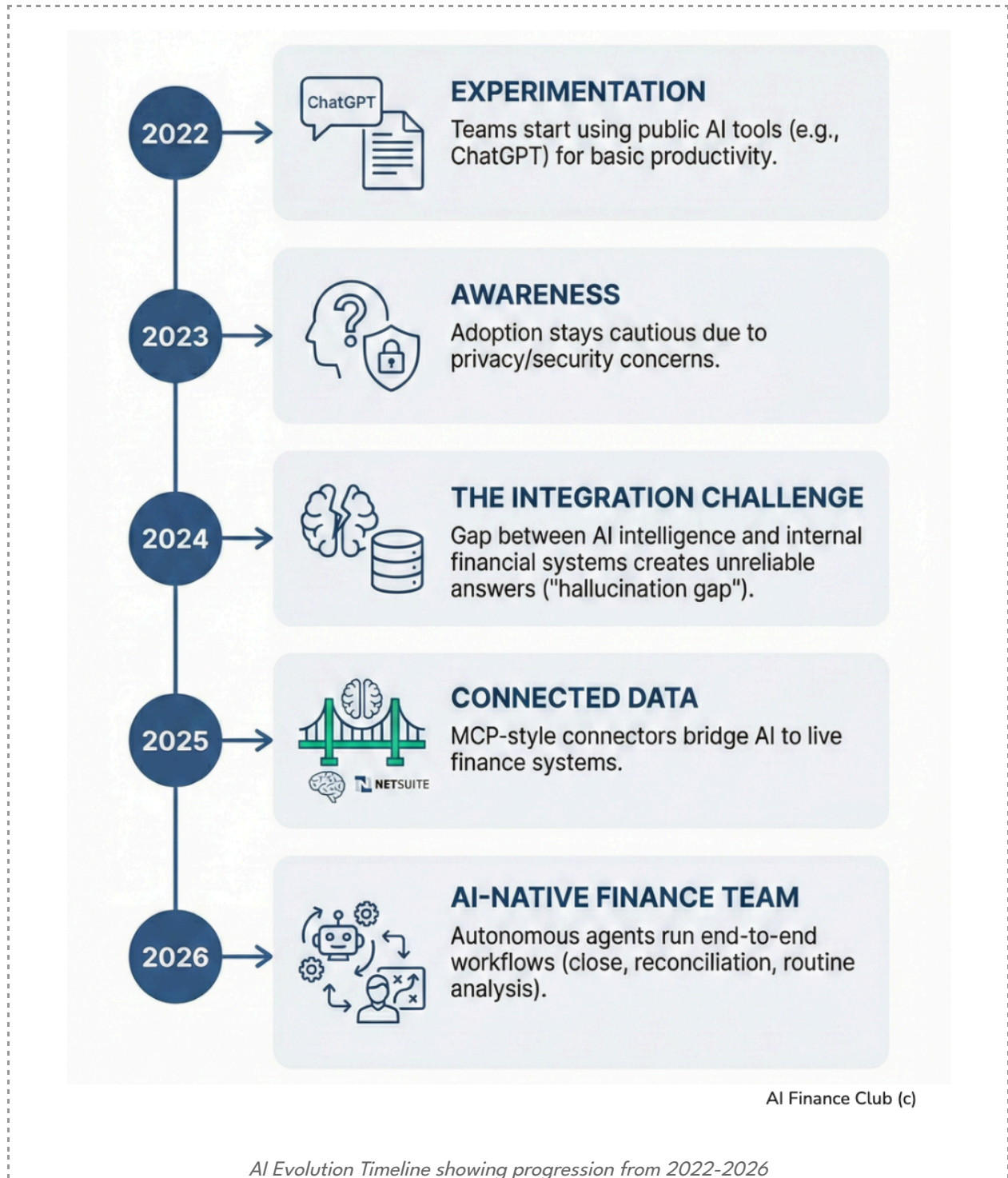
Planning a rollout? Use the AI Finance Maturity Model (page 7) to benchmark your team, then follow the 30-Day Implementation Roadmap (page 27) to plan your approach.

If you're evaluating security: Start with Part 3 to understand the governance framework before expanding AI usage across your team.

The State of AI in Finance

Finance teams have come a long way with AI over the past few years.

Here's how the journey has evolved:



2022 - Experimentation: Teams started using public AI tools like ChatGPT for basic tasks—drafting emails, summarizing documents.

2023 - Awareness: AI became impossible to ignore. CFOs started asking questions, but privacy concerns held back most serious adoption.

2024 - The Integration Challenge: Teams discovered that AI could reason well but struggled when it didn't have access to real company data. This created what many called the 'hallucination gap.'

2025 - Connected Data: New tools (specifically MCP—more on this later) now let AI connect directly to systems like NetSuite, creating a bridge between AI intelligence and your actual financial data.

This year, we anticipate the rise of the AI-Native Finance Team, where autonomous agents handle end-to-end workflows such as routine closures, reconciliation and analysis, moving human focus towards strategic interpretation and decision-making.

What does that look like in practice? Imagine arriving Monday morning to find that AI has already drafted your flash report, flagged three transactions that need review, and prepared talking points for your 10am budget meeting - all before you've finished your coffee.

With this, your role changes from just assembling information, or organising data. To validating insights and making decisions. The tedious work happens in the background, so you can focus on the human judgement that positions you as an integral finance partner to the business.

Why Teams Still Feel Overwhelmed

Even with these advances, many finance professionals feel stuck. Here's why:

1. **Data Disconnect:** Copying data into spreadsheets and then into AI tools is slow and creates security risks.
2. **Unreliable Results:** Vague prompts lead to vague (or wrong) answers, which erodes trust in the technology.
3. **Unclear Rules:** Without clear guidelines about what's allowed, many organizations default to blocking AI entirely.

What's Possible with Connected AI

When AI can access your live financial data (through secure connections), entirely new workflows become possible.

For example, instead of waiting until month-end close to discover that expenses are over budget, a CFO can ask: "Why did our gross margin drop in Q3?" The AI queries the actual transaction data, identifies the specific cost drivers, and presents a variance analysis. All in seconds.

This enables what we call "Flux-in-Flight" analysis: catching and resolving discrepancies as they happen, instead of weeks later.

AI Finance Maturity Model

Where does your team stand? Use this framework to assess your current state and plan your next steps.

Level	Stage	What It Looks Like	Tools Being Used
1	Curious	AI use is unofficial. Some employees use public tools privately. High concern about data privacy.	Free ChatGPT, basic spreadsheets
2	Exploring	Official pilots underway. Teams use secure AI for summarization and simple analysis. Human review is mandatory.	ChatGPT Enterprise, Microsoft Copilot
3	Integrating	AI connected to data sources. Use cases include automated variance reporting and draft audits.	NetSuite MCP, NetSuite Embedded AI, Custom solutions
4	AI-Native	AI handles complete workflows (e.g., "Draft the board pack"). The team focuses on exceptions and strategy.	Multi-agent workflows, full automation

Most finance teams are currently at Level 1 or 2. This handbook will help you reach Level 3 and beyond.

Part 1: AI Fundamentals for Finance Teams

Before diving into integrations and advanced tools, it's essential to understand how AI works, and how to communicate with it effectively.

Chapter 1.1: The 5 Core Principles

Principle 1: Context is Everything

AI models work by predicting what comes next based on patterns in their training data. Without enough context about your specific situation, they'll give you generic answers instead of useful ones.

In finance, context means things like: Which accounting standard are you using (GAAP or IFRS)? Which entity or subsidiary? What time period? What's your materiality threshold?

If you ask an AI to "analyze revenue," it might apply software company metrics to your manufacturing business, unless you tell it otherwise.

The Problem with Vague Prompts

A common mistake is uploading a complex financial file and typing something like "Analyze this file."

The screenshot shows a user interface for an AI tool. At the top, there is a table with 4 columns and 3 rows of data. Below the table is a button labeled "Analyze this file". Underneath the button, the text "Analyzed" is followed by a dropdown arrow. Below that, a message states: "Here's a clear, CFO-style analysis of the file `Saas_spend_2025.csv`, based on an initial exploratory review." A horizontal line separates this message from a section titled "1. Dataset overview". This section contains a bulleted list: "Rows: 500 SaaS vendors / contracts", "Columns: 10", and "Data quality:" with a sub-bullet "No missing values". At the bottom of the screenshot, the text "Simple prompting on something complex" is displayed in a light blue, italicized font.

4	Zoom	Communication	Operations	Subscription
5	Microsoft 365	Productivity Suite	IT	Pay-as-you-go
6	Tableau	Business	Finance	Annual License

Analyze this file

Analyzed ▾

Here's a clear, CFO-style analysis of the file `Saas_spend_2025.csv`, based on an initial exploratory review.

1. Dataset overview

- Rows: 500 SaaS vendors / contracts
- Columns: 10
- Data quality:
 - No missing values

Simple prompting on something complex

The result?

Monthly spend

- Median monthly actual spend: ≈ \$5.2k
- Upper quartile: ≈ \$8.2k
- Maximum single vendor: ≈ \$35.3k / month

This indicates:

- A long-tail SaaS portfolio with many mid-sized tools
- A small number of high-impact vendors driving outsized spend

Budget variance

- Median variance is slightly negative, meaning:
 - Many vendors are slightly under budget
- However:
 - 75th percentile variance is +\$294
 - Max overrun: +\$5.8k / month

🚩 There are material budget overruns worth investigating, not just noise.

Contract renewals

- 318 unique renewal dates across 500 vendors
- Some renewal dates appear multiple times → likely:
 - Same renewal cycles across teams
 - Potential bundling or duplication opportunities

⚠ Without monitoring, this creates renewal-risk clustering (many contracts renewing at once).

Payment frequency

- 3 payment types
- Annual payments dominate (~40%+ of vendors)

This is good for:

- Discounts
- But risky if:
- Usage is declining
 - Contracts auto-renew without review

Cost centers

- 11 cost centers
- One cost center ("CC-203") appears most frequently (79 vendors)

This suggests:

- A centralized SaaS buyer or
- A department acting as a SaaS aggregator (often IT, Ops, or Product)

Screenshots showing vague prompt with superficial results

A surface-level summary of what's in the file, information you already knew.

This wastes the AI's potential and your time.

The Better Approach: The High-Impact Prompt Framework

To get meaningful analysis, treat the AI like a new team member. Give it a role, a clear objective, and specific instructions.

Step 1 - Set the Context: Define who you are and what you're trying to accomplish.

I am the FP&A manager of a professional services company. I need to analyze our SaaS spend to find opportunities for cost reduction.

Step 2 - Request Data Checks: Ask the AI to verify the data before analyzing it.

First, check the data for consistency—look for missing values, duplicates, outliers, or unusual negative amounts.

Step 3 - Specify the Analysis: Tell the AI what types of analysis to perform.

Perform four types of analysis: (1) Descriptive - what happened, (2) Diagnostic - why it happened, (3) Predictive - what might happen next, (4) Prescriptive - what actions to take.

Step 4 - Define the Output: Be clear about what you want delivered.

Show your calculations so I can verify them. Create graphs to illustrate key findings. Write commentary explaining your conclusions.

Thought for 12m 59s >

Below is an FP&A-style SaaS spend review based on your file `SaaS_spend_2025.csv` (500 line items; each row looks like a *subscription/contract line*, not a time-series "month").

0) Data consistency checks (quality + sanity)

Missing values

- **Missing values:** 0 in every column.

Duplicates

- **Exact duplicate rows:** 0.
- Note: there are many *repeat vendor/department/cost center combinations*, but they differ by renewal date / contract type / payment frequency → that's *not* a "duplicate row" issue; it's **contract fragmentation** (important for savings).

1) Descriptive analysis — *What happened?* (run-rate view)

Overall spend (monthly run-rate)

Total monthly actual (run-rate):

$$\sum \text{Actual} = 3,278,829.81$$

Total monthly budget:

$$\sum \text{Budget} = 3,331,522.35$$


Total monthly variance:

$$\sum \text{Variance} = -52,692.54 = 3,278,829.81 - 3,331,522.35$$

Annualized projection (simple run-rate × 12):

- Projected annual actual: $3,278,829.81 \times 12 = 39,345,957.72$
- Projected annual budget: $3,331,522.35 \times 12 = 39,978,268.20$
- Projected annual variance: $-52,692.54 \times 12 = -632,310.48$

Top vendors (monthly run-rate)

Vendor Name	actual	budget	variance	variance_pct	
Snowflake	220,380.31	210,857.35	9,522.96	4.52%	
Azure	214,417.87	205,028.35	9,389.52	4.58%	
NetSuite	189,690.85	199,368.10	-9,677.25	-4.85%	
GCP	187,987.68	189,185.36	-1,197.68	-0.63%	
AWS	177,018.18	176,597.27	420.91	0.24%	
BambooHR	170,924.19	177,066.20	-6,142.01	-3.47%	
Salesforce	155,892.51	152,584.01	3,308.50	2.17%	
ServiceNow	145,732.03	154,655.88	-8,923.85	-5.77%	
Looker	135,622.77	133,228.58	2,394.19	1.80%	
Marketo	125,868.72	127,286.16	-1,417.44	-1.11%	

2) Diagnostic analysis — Why did it happen? (drivers + root causes)

Driver 1 — Spend concentrated in “variable” areas (Cloud + usage-like contracts)

- Pay-as-you-go spend: 1,024,095.33 monthly (\approx 31.2% of total run-rate)
- Pay-as-you-go is common in the largest vendors (Salesforce, Snowflake, NetSuite, BambooHR, Azure, AWS, ServiceNow, Google Workspace, GCP, Freshdesk).

Why it matters: usage/consumption + add-ons tends to create *drift* unless you have tight governance (tagging, quotas, renewal controls).

Driver 2 — Contract fragmentation (harder to manage + negotiate)

These vendors have unusually high numbers of separate line items and renewal dates:

Vendor Name	lines	depts	renewals	actual
Looker	24	3	24	135,622.77
Google Workspace	22	3	21	108,032.66
BambooHR	19	1	18	170,924.19
Zendesk	19	2	18	101,856.19
NetSuite	18	1	18	189,690.85
Figma	18	2	17	73,384.81
Snowflake	17	3	17	220,380.31

3) Predictive analysis — *What might happen next?* (scenario-based)

Because there's no "month" column, we can't do a true time-series forecast. Instead, we forecast **run-rate continuation + renewal risk**.

Baseline forecast (status quo)

Assumption: current monthly run-rate persists.

$$\text{Forecast annual spend} = 12 \times 3,278,829.81 = 39,345,957.72$$

Renewal exposure (where spend is "in play" soon)

Using **today = 2026-01-15** and the renewal dates in the file:

$$\text{Spend renewing in next 90d} = 607,735.01 \text{ (18.5\% of total)}$$

$$\text{Spend renewing in next 180d} = 1,050,362.18 \text{ (32.0\% of total)}$$

If you did **nothing** and vendors push a **3% uplift** at renewal (illustrative risk scenario):

$$\text{Incremental monthly run-rate risk} = 0.03 \times 1,050,362.18 = 31,510.87$$

Annualized:

$$31,510.87 \times 12 = 378,130.38$$

4) Prescriptive analysis — *What actions to take?* (with quantified levers)

Action A — "Get back to budget" on overspend lines (fast FP&A lever)

Savings if every over-budget line is reduced to budget:

$$\text{Savings/month} = \sum \max(0, \text{Actual}_i - \text{Budget}_i) = 140,044.67$$

Annualized:

$$140,044.67 \times 12 = 1,680,536.04$$

How to execute: focus on the top over-budget vendors/categories (Snowflake, Azure, Salesforce, Data Warehouse, Cloud Infrastructure, CRM) and require justification for the drivers (seat growth, add-ons, usage spikes).

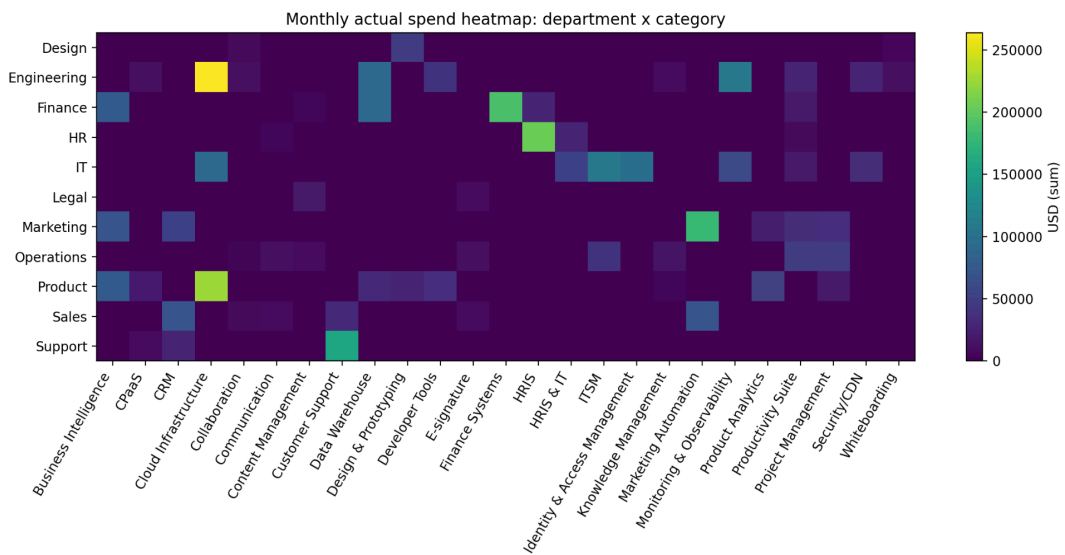
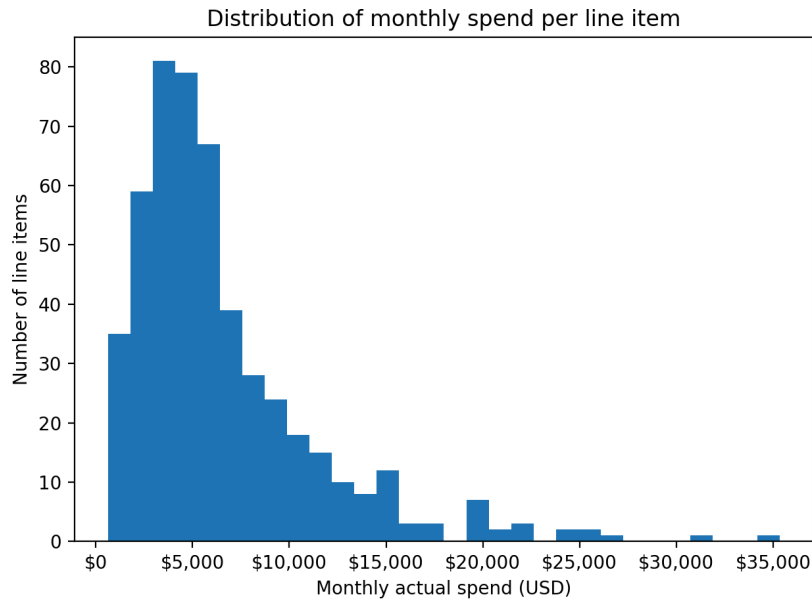
Action B — Renegotiate the top 10 vendors (where leverage is)

Top 10 vendors total:

$$\sum \text{Actual}_{\text{Top10}} = 1,723,535.11$$

If you achieve an average **5% price reduction** (via consolidation + competitive pressure + longer-term commitment where sensible):

$$\text{Savings/month} = 0.05 \times 1,723,535.11 = 86,176.76$$

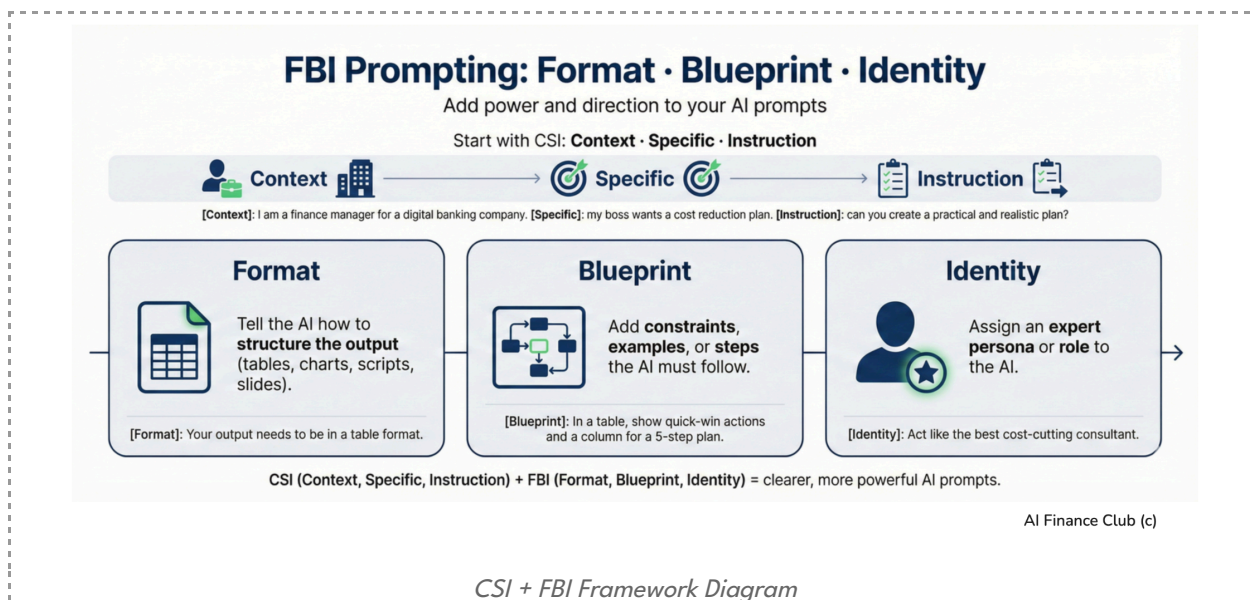


Screenshots showing detailed prompt with comprehensive analysis output

With this approach, the AI can identify outliers, model potential savings, and suggest specific governance improvements.

Principle 2: Prompting is a Skill

Effective prompting follows a structured framework. We recommend the CSI + FBI approach:



- C - Context: The background information the AI needs
- S - Specific: The exact task or question
- I - Instruction: What to do and how to format the output
- F - Format: The structure you want (table, bullets, narrative)
- B - Blueprint: Examples or style cues to guide quality
- I - Identity: The role or persona for the AI to adopt

Example prompt using this framework:

```
I am a finance manager for a digital banking company. My boss wants a cost reduction plan. Can you create a practical and realistic plan? Output in table format with quick wins and a 5-step implementation plan. Write this like an experienced cost-cutting consultant would.
```

Principle 3: Trust but Verify

Here's something important to understand: Finance requires precision (\$1 + \$1 must always equal \$2), but AI works on probability (it predicts what's most likely to be correct).

This means you should:

Trust AI for: Summarizing documents, identifying trends, drafting narratives, writing code, and formatting data.

Verify AI for: Mathematical calculations, citing specific regulations, and retrieving factual data.

Before accepting any AI output, ask yourself these three questions:

4. Source: Do I have the source data to check this?
5. Logic: Can I trace the steps the AI took?
6. Liability: Would I sign my name to this without reviewing it first?

Principle 4: Data Confidentiality Matters

Different AI tools have different security levels:

Public AI (Free Tools): Your data may be used to train future models. Never input sensitive information like social security numbers, bank accounts, or unreleased financial data.

Enterprise AI (Paid/Secure): Your data is encrypted and won't be used for training. Safe for internal analysis and anonymized data.

Connected AI (MCP): Data stays within NetSuite's security. The AI can only see what your role permits, and nothing is retained for training.

Principle 5: AI Amplifies Your Expertise

AI doesn't replace accounting knowledge, it augments it. The quality of AI output directly depends on the expertise of the person asking the questions.

A junior analyst might ask AI to "fix the spreadsheet." A senior leader asks AI to "build a sensitivity analysis showing how revenue changes under different pricing scenarios."

Domain experts can also spot errors that novices would miss. Your financial expertise makes AI more useful, not less relevant.

Chapter 1.2: Quick Wins You Can Start Today

You don't need any special setup to start using AI for financial analysis. Here are five practical use cases you can try immediately:

1. Variance Analysis Narratives

Calculating variance numbers is straightforward. Explaining why they occurred takes hours. Let AI help draft the narrative.

Act as a CFO. Based on the attached variance table and these operational notes [paste notes], draft a Board-level commentary explaining the 15% increase in OpEx. Focus on the engineering headcount expansion and marketing ROI. Keep the tone objective and forward-looking.

2. Journal Entry Templates

Creating multi-line journal entries for payroll or allocations is tedious and error-prone. AI can generate the template for you.

Create a NetSuite CSV import template for a payroll journal entry. Split \$150,000 in salaries across Engineering (40%), Sales (40%), and Admin (20%). Include headers for ExternalID, Subsidiary, Account, Debit, Credit, and Department. Make sure debits and credits balance.

3. Financial Ratio Analysis

Analyzing a vendor's or acquisition target's financial health requires calculating multiple ratios. Upload their statements and let AI do the math.

Analyze the financial health of this company based on the uploaded statements. Calculate Current Ratio, Quick Ratio, and Debt-to-Equity Ratio. Compare against industry standards for a manufacturing firm and flag any liquidity concerns.

4. Budget vs. Actual Commentary

Transform raw variance data into a coherent story for leadership.

Act as a Senior FP&A Analyst. Review the attached Budget vs. Actuals report for Q3. Identify the top 3 variances by dollar amount. For each, explain the likely driver based on the operational notes provided. Suggest one corrective action for each negative variance.

5. Accrual Calculations

Pro-rated expenses and unbilled services often delay month-end close. AI can interpret contract terms and calculate the numbers.

Review the attached software license contract. The term is November 1, 2024 to October 31, 2026 for \$24,000 total. We're closing books for December 2024. Calculate the monthly expense, the accrued amount for December, and the prepaid balance. Provide the journal entry with debits and credits.

Chapter 1.3: Advanced Prompting Techniques

Chain of Thought

For complex calculations, ask the AI to work through the problem step by step. This reduces errors significantly.

Don't calculate the total immediately. First, identify the contract term. Second, calculate the total transaction price. Third, allocate the price based on standalone selling prices. Finally, sum the revenue for Q1.

Few-Shot Learning

Show the AI examples of how you want things done before asking it to do the work.

Classify these bank transactions into GL accounts. Examples: 'UBER *TRIP 8455' -> 6020 - Travel & Entertainment 'AWS WEB SVCS' -> 6100 - Software Subscription 'WEWORK MEMBERSHIP' -> 6010 - Rent Expense Now classify: 'DELTA AIR LINES 00623' -> ?

Chunking

For long documents, break them into parts. This prevents the AI from missing details buried in the middle.

I'm going to share a credit agreement in 3 parts. Just confirm receipt of each part—don't summarize yet. [Paste Part 1][Wait for confirmation][Paste Part 2][Wait for confirmation][Paste Part 3]Now that you have everything, analyze the Covenants section and list any restrictions on additional debt.

Constraint Setting

Tell the AI exactly what boundaries to follow. This is especially useful for executive summaries.

Summarize the Q3 variance report for the Board. Constraints:- Maximum 200 words- Exactly 3 bullet points- Professional, direct tone (no words like 'exciting' or 'concerning')- Only mention variances over \$10,000- Must include a recommendation for Q4 forecast

15 Finance Prompt Starters

Copy and adapt these prompts for your own work:

Category	Prompt
Analysis	"Analyze these trends and identify the top 3 drivers of variance..."
Analysis	"Calculate key ratios (Current, Quick, Debt/Equity) from this balance sheet..."
Analysis	"Identify outliers in this vendor spend report greater than \$10k..."
Communication	"Draft an executive summary for the Board explaining Q3 results..."
Communication	"Write a collection email to a client who is 45 days overdue..."
Communication	"Explain deferred revenue to a non-finance stakeholder..."

Operational	"Create a journal entry template for this payroll data split by department..."
Operational	"Debug this Excel formula that returns a #REF error..."
Operational	"Draft an expense policy for remote employee home office stipends..."
Strategic	"Model 3 scenarios (Base, Best, Worst) for Q4 revenue..."
Strategic	"Analyze this competitor's 10-K and summarize their risk factors..."
Strategic	"Assess the financial impact of a 10% increase in raw material costs..."
Learning	"Explain ASC 606 Step 3 (Transaction Price) with a SaaS example..."
Learning	"How do I calculate WACC for a private company?"
Learning	"Summarize the key changes in IFRS 16 regarding leases..."

NetSuite's Built-In AI Capabilities

Before connecting external AI tools, it's worth knowing what's already available inside NetSuite. Oracle has taken an "AI built-in, not bolted-on" approach—embedding intelligent features directly into the platform at no extra cost.

These capabilities fall into three categories:



AI Finance Club (c)

Financial Operations

Bill Capture uses AI-powered document detection and OCR to automate accounts payable. Drag and drop (or email) vendor invoices into NetSuite, and the system extracts key details—vendor, PO number, line items, amounts—and performs automatic 3-way matching. The AI improves over time as it learns from your data.

Exception Management acts as a continuous auditor. It scans journals, invoices, payments, and other transactions to flag anomalies that fall outside typical patterns. Unusual entries surface on a dashboard with suggested corrective actions, helping you catch errors before month-end instead of during it.

Analytics & Reporting

SuiteAnalytics Assistant lets you query your data in plain English. Ask "What's our accounts payable aging?" or "Show me top 10 customers by revenue this quarter" and get instant answers—no saved search required. The AI can even generate summaries with key takeaways.

Narrative Reporting automates the writing that slows down every close. The system drafts written commentary on financial results—highlighting variances, explaining drivers, comparing periods—so your team can edit and refine rather than start from scratch.

Predictive Planning applies machine learning to your forecasts. It detects bias (are your sales projections consistently optimistic?), identifies hidden correlations, and can run scenario predictions to flag potential shortfalls early.

Productivity & Support

Text Enhance generates and refines text anywhere in NetSuite—item descriptions, collection emails, purchase order memos. It includes one-click translation for global teams.

NetSuite Expert is an AI support agent trained on NetSuite's documentation. Ask how-to questions in natural language and get step-by-step answers with source references.

Quick Reference

Feature	What It Does	Benefit
Bill Capture	AI-powered invoice scanning with automatic 3-way matching	Eliminates manual AP data entry
Exception Management	Continuously scans transactions to flag anomalies	Catches errors before month-end
Text Enhance	Generates and refines text with one-click translation	Faster, consistent communication
Narrative Reporting	Auto-generates written commentary on financial results	Speeds up board report creation
SuiteAnalytics Assistant	Natural language queries ("Show top 10 customers by revenue")	No need to build saved searches
NetSuite Expert	Answers how-to questions in natural language	Quick answers from documentation
Predictive Planning	ML-driven forecast explanations and bias detection	Improves forecast accuracy
Item Recommendations	AI-powered cross-sell suggestions based on purchase history	Increases average order value
Customer Churn Prediction	Scores customers on likelihood to drop off	Proactive retention, protected revenue

These features work out of the box. Here's a simple rule of thumb:

Use NetSuite's built-in AI when:

- The task is well-defined and repetitive (invoice scanning, anomaly flagging)
- You want zero setup—just enable and use
- The workflow fits NetSuite's standard processes

Use MCP when:

- You need to ask ad-hoc questions across multiple record types
- You want to combine NetSuite data with your own reasoning and context
- You're building custom analyses that don't fit a standard report

Most teams start with built-in features to build confidence, then expand to MCP as their comfort grows. Part 2 covers the Model Context Protocol in detail.

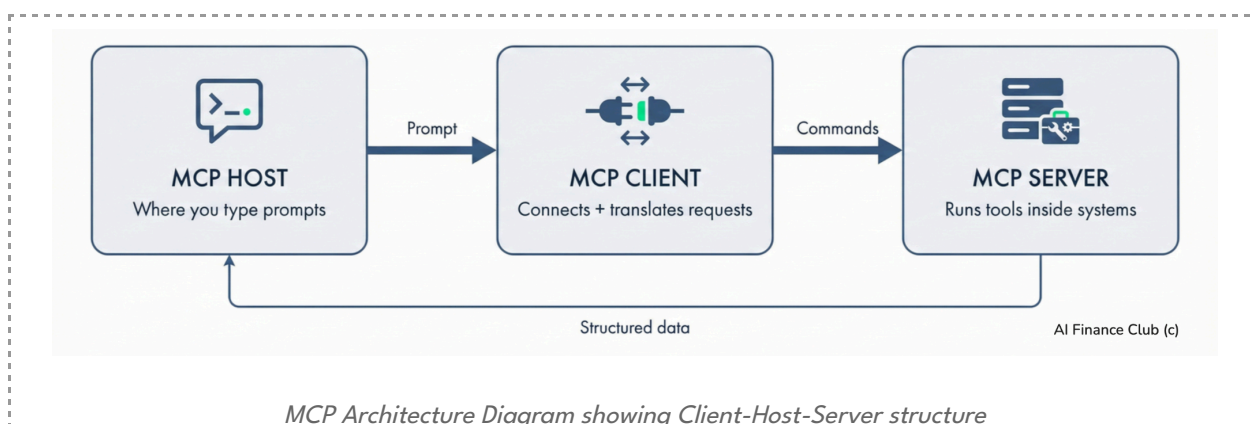
Part 2: Connected AI - The Model Context Protocol

Chapter 2.1: What is MCP?

MCP (Model Context Protocol) is a technology that lets AI tools connect directly to systems like NetSuite. Instead of copying data into spreadsheets and then into AI, the AI can query your live data securely.

Think of it like giving AI a secure, read-only window into your financial system.

But, what's important to know is that this isn't just about integration, it's about changing how finance teams interact with their data. Traditional workflows required you to pull reports, export to Excel, and then ask AI for help. With MCP, the question becomes the workflow. You ask, AI queries and you verify. The gap between "I wonder..." and "Here's the answer" shrinks from hours to seconds.



The architecture has three parts:

- MCP Host: The AI interface where you type (like Claude or ChatGPT)
- MCP Client: The connector that translates between AI and NetSuite
- MCP Server: The integration inside NetSuite that executes queries and returns data

Why is this important?

Real-Time Data: Unlike document uploads that can be outdated, MCP queries live data. If a journal entry posts at 9:00 AM, the AI sees it at 9:01 AM.

Built-In Security: MCP uses secure authentication and respects NetSuite's permission system. The AI can only see what your role allows.

No Data Training: Data retrieved through MCP is used only to answer your question—it's not stored or used to train AI models.

What MCP Can and Can't Do

Good for: Running queries against your data, retrieving specific records, running saved searches, generating analysis of live data.

Not ideal for: Mass data updates (though possible with strict controls), replacing full BI dashboards, or processing very large data sets (100,000+ records).

Currently, MCP works with Claude and ChatGPT. Support for other platforms is in development. In this handbook, we'll be deep diving into NetSuite's MCP.

Chapter 2.2: NetSuite MCP Use Cases

Here are four practical examples of what becomes possible when AI can access your live NetSuite data:

1. Real-Time Variance Analysis ("Flux-in-Flight")

Instead of waiting for month-end close, audit expenses in real-time.

```
Check the Travel expense category for Q3 to date vs Q2 to date. Group by Department. If any department is more than 20% over, drill down and list the top 3 vendor bills driving the increase.
```

2. 360-Degree Credit Risk Check

Combine financial data with customer support data for a complete picture.

```
I'm reviewing the credit limit for Customer X. Summarize their current A/R balance, their average days to pay over the last 6 months, and check if they have any open critical support cases.
```

3. Finding Unbilled Revenue

Revenue leakage happens when fulfillment occurs but invoicing doesn't follow.

```
Find all Sales Orders from last month that are 'Pending Billing' but show 'Fully Fulfilled.' List the Sales Order number, date, and amount.
```

4. Continuous Audit ("Policy Police")

Automate review of high-risk manual journal entries.

Show me all Journal Entries posted in the last 7 days by [User Name] that are greater than \$10,000. Display the memo and GL accounts impacted.

MCP Prompt Library by Business Process

These prompts are designed specifically for use with NetSuite MCP. Copy and adapt them:

1. Record to Report

Compare my trial balance between [current month] and [prior month] and highlight accounts with variances greater than 10% or \$X

Analyze actual vs budget for all expense accounts this quarter and explain the top 5 variances

Show GL accounts where current balance is trending significantly different from same period last year

What transactions are still open or unposted from before closed periods? Show aging and responsible parties

2. Design to Build

Review active items with no transactions in the last 12 months—flag for potential inactivation

Show items where selling price is below average cost—flag potential margin issues

Show inventory items with negative quantities or values that need investigation

Identify items with only a single vendor—flag supply chain risk

3. Lead to Quote

Identify leads in the pipeline for more than 90 days without becoming opportunities

Show opportunities by stage with aging—how long each has been in current stage vs average

Identify opportunities over \$X with no activity in the last 14 days

Generate sales forecast for next quarter based on weighted pipeline and historical close rates

4. Order to Cash

Show sales orders pending fulfillment for more than 5 business days

Show unbilled sales orders and fulfillments that should have invoices

Which customers generated the highest sales for 2024 and 2025? Show top 3

Generate AR aging report showing balances by customer in 30/60/90/120+ day buckets

5. Procure to Pay

Identify purchase orders partially received with items outstanding for more than 30 days

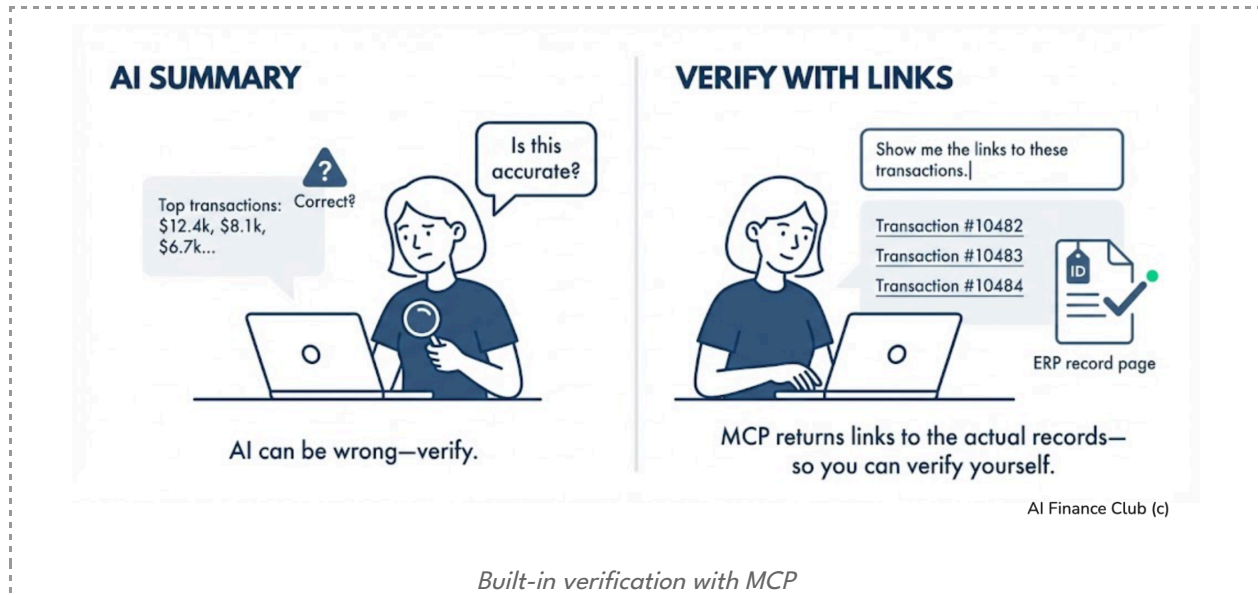
Show vendors we haven't purchased from in 12 months but are still active

Show total spend by vendor, category, department, and location for current fiscal year

Generate AP aging report showing balances by vendor in current/30/60/90/120+ day bucket

Validating AI Outputs

A common concern with AI is incorrect information. With MCP, you have a built-in verification method: ask for source links.



Built-in verification with MCP

After any query, you can prompt: "Show me the links to these transactions."

The AI will return clickable URLs to the actual NetSuite records, so you can verify the data yourself.

Chapter 2.3: Prompting with Connected Data

Prompting with MCP requires a slightly different approach than regular AI prompts. Follow this framework:

7. Specify Data Source: Tell the AI where to look ("Using NetSuite data...")
8. Define Parameters: Be explicit about dates, subsidiaries, statuses ("fiscal year 2026," "posted transactions only")
9. Request Audit Trail: Ask to see the query used ("Show the SQL query")
10. Request Verification: Ask for links to source records

Example:

Using NetSuite data, find all invoices created in September 2025 for the Software subsidiary that are still Open. Calculate the total balance and list the top 5 customers by outstanding amount. Show the query you used.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Too Vague: "Show me sales" might return all transactions including non-posted ones. Fix: "Show me posted Net Sales for the US Subsidiary."

Wrong Assumptions: Assuming AI knows your custom field names. Fix: Ask AI to "List the fields for the Customer record" first.

Missing Context: Not specifying which subsidiary. Fix: Always include subsidiary when your NetSuite has multiple.

Part 3: Security, Governance & Best Practices

Chapter 3.1: Keeping AI Safe

As you deploy AI, security becomes critical. Here's a four-layer framework:

Layer 1: Authentication (Who is using AI?)

- Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for all NetSuite access, especially accounts linked to MCP
- Use Token-Based Authentication for MCP connections—never simple passwords
- Revoke access immediately when employees leave

Layer 2: Authorization (What can AI access?)

- Create dedicated roles for AI use—don't use admin accounts
- Start with read-only permissions; add write access only for validated use cases
- Follow "least privilege"—if AI is for AR Collections, it shouldn't see Payroll

Layer 3: Audit Trail (What did AI do?)

- NetSuite logs every MCP query—review these logs weekly
- Watch for unusual patterns (large data exports, after-hours access)
- Require AI to cite sources so outputs can be verified

Layer 4: Data Governance (The Rules)

Establish clear guidelines about what data can be used with AI:

- Green Zone (OK): Public data, internal memos, aggregated analysis
- Yellow Zone (Caution): Financial analysis with anonymization—requires human review
- Red Zone (Never): Social security numbers, bank accounts, unreleased earnings, passwords

Chapter 3.2: AI Governance

Human-in-the-Loop

For anything that impacts financial statements, payments, or contracts: AI provides the draft, humans provide the approval. No exceptions.

Rollout Strategy

Phase 1 - Pilot (Month 1): Deploy to 2-3 experienced users in a test environment. Focus on low-risk tasks like variance analysis.

Phase 2 - Expand (Month 2): Roll out to the broader team with read-only access. Conduct training on prompt writing.

Phase 3 - Scale (Month 3+): Enable write capabilities for specific workflows with approval routing.

This phased approach is about risk management. But, it's also about building organizational confidence. Each successful use case creates finance team advocates who will then speed up adoption across the team.

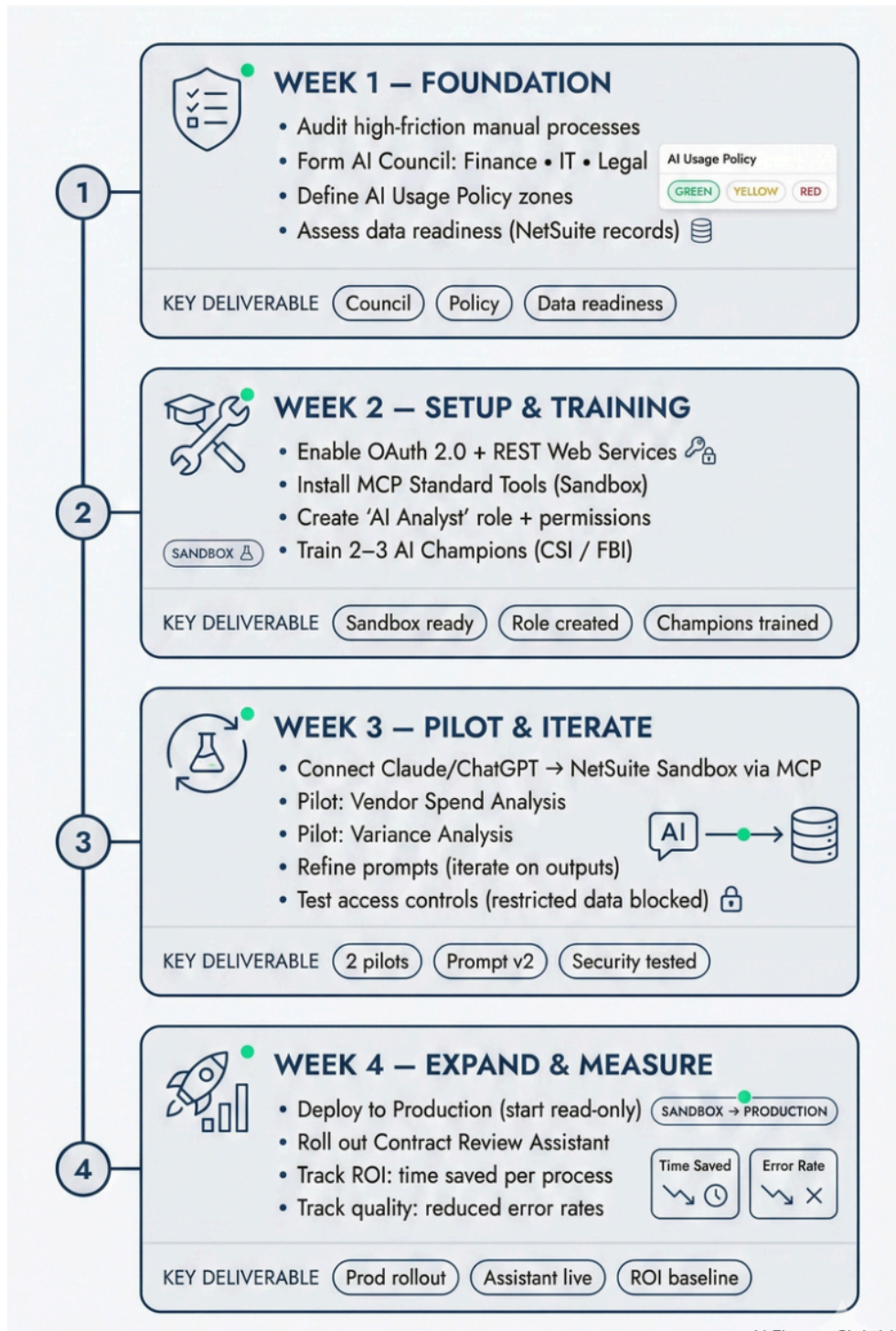
Your 30-Day Implementation Roadmap

Week 1 - Foundation: Assess current AI usage, identify 2-3 pilot use cases, assemble stakeholders.

Week 2 - Setup: Configure MCP connection, create dedicated roles, train pilot users.

Week 3 - Pilot: Run pilots, gather feedback, document what works and what doesn't.

Week 4 - Expand: Refine based on feedback, expand to additional users, measure results.



30-Day Roadmap Visual

Measuring Success

Track these metrics to demonstrate value:

Efficiency: Hours saved on month-end close (target: 20-30% reduction)

Quality: Reduction in journal entry errors, improvement in forecast accuracy

Strategic Impact: Time shifted from data gathering to analysis (e.g., more scenario models per quarter)

Common Questions

Will AI replace my finance team? No. AI replaces tasks, not roles. It handles repetitive work (data entry, reconciliation, first drafts) so your team can focus on judgment, strategy, and relationships.

Is my data safe with MCP? Yes, when configured correctly. Data stays within NetSuite's security, is only used to answer your specific query, and is not used to train AI models.

Do I need to know coding? Not necessarily. MCP lets you use natural language. However, understanding basic concepts helps you verify results and troubleshoot issues.

What if AI creates an incorrect journal entry? This is why human review is mandatory. AI drafts the entry; a human reviews and posts it. Using draft status adds an extra safety layer.

Additional Resources

- Prompting Guides: docs.anthropic.com
- NetSuite Documentation: docs.oracle.com
- Accounting Standards: fasb.org

Conclusion

The gap between AI's potential and its practical application in finance is closing fast. What once required data scientists and custom integrations is now accessible to any finance professional willing to learn the fundamentals.

Throughout this handbook, you've seen how the right approach to AI can transform financial operations:

From reactive to proactive. Instead of discovering variances at month-end, you can catch them as they happen with real-time queries against live data.

From manual to automated. Tasks that consumed hours (invoice processing, journal entry creation, report writing) can now be completed in minutes with AI assistance.

From generic to connected. The era of copying data into spreadsheets and hoping AI gives useful answers is ending. Connected AI through MCP means insights grounded in your actual financial data.

But tools alone don't drive transformation. Your expertise does. AI amplifies what you already know about finance, accounting, and your business. The professionals who thrive will be those who combine deep domain knowledge with fluency in these new capabilities.

Start small. Pick one use case from this guide (variance analysis, journal entry templates, or a simple MCP query) and try it this week. Verify the results. Build confidence. Then expand.

The finance function is evolving. The question isn't whether AI will change how you work, but whether you'll be leading that change or catching up to it.

What's Next?

Want to deepen your AI skills? Join thousands of finance professionals learning to work effectively with AI. For resources, training, and community support, contact Nicolas at: hello@nicolasboucher.online

Ready to explore NetSuite + Connected Data? Learn how MCP and NetSuite's built-in AI capabilities can transform your finance operations. For a guided tour, complete the form [here](#) to get started.

Your AI Finance Expert,

Nicolas Boucher

Disclosure & Disclaimer

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