SESSION RECAP

Corporate Finance Technology Selection

Date: July 29, 2026 | **Presenter:** Lee Rogers, CPA Crossings

Quick Recap

Lee Rogers of CPA Crossings led a CPE webinar introducing vendor-neutral frameworks to help mid-market finance teams make smarter technology decisions. Drawing on CPA Crossings' latest publication and insights from subject-matter experts Mark Brusu and Ellen Choi, the session walked through the changing finance landscape, five common challenges in evaluating new technology, a practical 20-criteria vendor scorecard, and a four-phase implementation roadmap. Recurring themes included understanding what "AI" actually means at each stage, designing controls in from the start, mapping workflows before automating, ensuring data readiness, and establishing baseline metrics to prove ROI.

Key Points

"AI" Is Not One Thing — Know the Four Stages

AI progresses through four stages: **Automation** (deterministic rules) → **Machine Learning** (probabilistic, trained on data) → **Generative AI** (creates content, can be plausibly wrong) → **Agentic AI** (acts autonomously). Always ask a vendor which stage their product actually is — each carries different governance needs, and pricing should reflect it.

Every Tech Shift Carries a Hidden Risk

Continuous processing, modular systems, automated controls, and real-time dashboards deliver speed and flexibility — but can **compound errors, fragment audit trails, drift out of compliance, or create false confidence** without proper oversight.

Five Common Challenges

Vendor hype: Cut through inconsistent terminology with four questions — Can you reproduce the audit trail? Are AI suggestions vs. automated actions clearly logged? How is model drift handled? What happens when the AI is wrong? **The integration maze:** Don't automate bad processes — map current workflows before engaging vendors. **Change management:** Tech projects are people problems; expect resistance (shadow spreadsheets, distrust of new numbers), and soft ROI is hard to quantify. **Data quality:** Manual coding accuracy should hit 85–90% and you need 12–24 months of clean history before AI can produce reliable results. **Risk & governance:** The absence of a formal

Vendor Evaluation Scorecard — The Most Actionable Tool

20 criteria scored 1–5 across five weighted categories, with certain items flagged as deal-breakers:

Category	Weight
Audit & Control Capabilities	**25%**
Data Integrity & Integration	**25%**
Vendor Stability & Support	**25%**
Financial Reporting & Compliance	**20%**
Total Cost Transparency	**10%**

Budget for the Real Cost

In a $50M manufacturer example, the five-year total is roughly **$4.6M** and is heavily front-loaded (Year 1 ≈ $2.25M). Software licensing is only **20–30%** of total cost — the rest is implementation, data migration, internal time, and training.

Four-Phase Implementation Roadmap

1. Assessment & Planning → 2. Selection & Negotiation → 3. Implementation & Testing → 4. Optimization & Ongoing Governance. Document processes and capture baselines early; run scenario-based demos with your own data; validate migration with parallel testing; then track benefits, tune the system, and conduct annual SOC reviews after go-live.

Emerging Trends to Watch

ERP vendors expanding into AI-powered apps (lock-in risk), enterprise-grade tools reaching mid-market pricing, banks offering AI tools, and a **rising AI-driven fraud landscape** (deepfake wire requests, sophisticated phishing) that hits mid-market firms hardest.

■ Top 5 Takeaways

1. **Look beyond the demo** — push for your own data and use cases.
2. **Plan for the real cost** — licensing is the minority of total spend.
3. **Design controls in, not on** — build them from the start.
4. **Establish baselines** — you can't prove ROI without them.
5. **Involve auditors early** — prevent surprises down the road.