

## { TREASURY TECHNOLOGY }

## MATTHEW STEANS

Breaking through the noise – the time to build a case for new treasury technology is now

When are any of the latest technology advances going to reach a point where it is actually worth considering implementation? Bitcoin this, blockchain that, add in some artificial intelligence and robotics to get a rough and ready summary of today's hot topics. We've been talking about electronic bank account management and virtual bank accounts, for instance, for a number of years, but they're still not fully at a stage where they can be widely used by global treasury operations.

It does feel like we are starting to reach a tipping point, however. Looking closely at the fintechs that banks have within their innovation labs and communities provides a guide to the innovation horizon. Increasingly, we are seeing collaborative events and seminars with subject experts from fintechs. That's progress compared to the days when topics were presented by people who didn't understand technology, let alone the use-case. And it's an evolution that facilitates an understanding of how new technology can actually be used within treasury.

The key with all advances in technology is that we, as treasurers, should not have to look for giant shifts in the way we perform our tasks to embrace change and become more efficient.

There are a lot of things that keep a treasurer awake at night, so wouldn't it be great if we



could reduce that stress? What if we could use dynamic tools that are more efficient and transparent than just listing items in Excel on a daily basis?

What holds us back? Often it is the fear around being at the bleeding edge. What happens if we implement a new system only to find it functions poorly? Will anyone in our treasury function remember how to perform key tasks manually?

The new school will embrace the technology revolution; the old school may be reluctant. So, how do we actually get it done? This is where the burning platform theory comes in handy – set the old platform on fire and make everyone

move to the new. Crises, or systemic failures, are prime examples of occasions when change is forced. However, the pace of technological change is such that we shouldn't let the possibility of a future crisis be the deciding factor when it comes to implementing innovative technology. The dangers of clinging to out-of-date approaches should be self-evident and should prompt change. What does this actually mean? It is about detailing the shortcomings of the current platform and proving the benefits of the new. Cost savings and error reductions are easy to highlight. This exercise is similar to a cost-benefit analysis – with a bit more of a kick.

Once appropriate parties give their approval, implementing any type of new technology requires a well-thought-out

plan with buy-in from all stakeholders. You only have one chance at implementation, so do it properly.

One very effective approach to structuring an implementation is to use the agile methodology. Break the project down into small, very achievable tasks, set weekly or monthly deadlines (referred to as 'sprints' within fintechs) and have regular catch-ups to identify any blockers. This approach is a lot more dynamic compared to typical project plans as you get regular feedback and delivery of software rather than one big bang go-live at the end. It brings visibility and clear ownership. I am a campaigner for this in all aspects of work and use this methodology with standard treasury tasks and projects as well.

If you do think an area of your treasury should be developed or a new technology implemented, you'd best get on a fast camel, as chances are, you're already behind. By the time you implement the technology, it may be out of date. That's the central risk within this fast-paced environment. Ultimately, breaking the process down and using the agile methodology is the best way to get it done.

Good luck out there! 🍀



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The new school will embrace the technology revolution