TREASURY LEADERS PLAYBOOK 2026

What treasury professionals should be thinking about

Shared as part of our Treasury Outlook 2026 live session

The Treasury Recruitment Company

Introduction

This Playbook has been created for the wider treasury community, using the themes and conversations from our recent London Treasury Leaders Roundtables.

We spent three hours with 32 senior treasury professionals at our London Treasury Leaders Roundtables. The afternoon was designed around four streams: Cash, Liquidity & Capital Management, Risk, Regulation & Operational Threats, People, Skills & Operations and Artificial Intelligence & Automation.

We came away genuinely inspired by these conversations. Everything here reflects the common themes from the room, kept anonymous, rather than anything said by any one individual or company.

I originally thought this Playbook would be structured around those four streams. But when I listened back to some of the discussions, I realised the same themes were appearing across all four rooms.

Again and again, the discussion came back to the same eight practical challenges.

This was not about another presentation, more theory or someone telling treasury teams what the function might look like in ten years' time. It was about what treasury teams are actually doing today.

The questions that kept coming through were:

- What is working?
- What is not working?
- What mistakes have others already made?
- Where should you focus your time and effort?
- What should you implement first?

One good example came from the AI and Technology room. The discussion was not really about future AI. It was about where treasury teams start today, where the quick wins are, and how they trust the outputs if they cannot fully trust the inputs.

When I listened back, I realised it was a much more mature discussion than many of the treasury and AI conferences I see advertised at the moment. Treasury teams want practical results, not hype.

So that is where we have tried to focus this Playbook. We do not have all the answers, but we have tried to capture the biggest challenges that came through and give you space to think about what they mean for your own treasury team.

> This is not a formal survey. It is a practical summary of the themes we heard directly from 32 senior treasury professionals during our London Treasury Leaders Roundtables.
>
> This Playbook is being shared as part of our Treasury Outlook 2026 live Teams session with Mike Richards and Katie Hardie, looking at what treasury professionals should be thinking about.

The eight challenges

- 1. Doing More With Less
- 2. Fixing The Data Problem
- 3. Modernising Treasury Technology
- 4. Improving Cash Forecasting
- 5. Turning AI Into Practical Value
- 6. Managing Growing Complexity
- 7. Protecting Treasury From Emerging Risks
- 8. Learning From Peers

1. DOING MORE WITH LESS

What we heard

One of the strongest themes across the discussions was that treasury teams are being asked to deliver more whilst operating with limited resources. Some treasury professionals in the room were dealing with growth, acquisitions and increasing complexity. Others were facing cost pressures, flat team structures or ownership changes. The challenge was remarkably similar: the workload continues to grow, but the available capacity often does not.

What stood out was that the conversation quickly moved away from headcount and onto priorities. Treasury professionals were asking where the team is really spending its time, which activities genuinely add value, and what could be automated, simplified or stopped. Several treasury professionals also raised succession planning and the risk created when key knowledge sits with only one or two people.

The questions underneath the discussion were:

- Where is the team really spending its time?
- Which activities genuinely add value?
- What could be automated, simplified or stopped altogether?

Reflection

What activities consume most of your team's time today?

Are there any processes that could be simplified, automated or stopped?

If a key member of the team left tomorrow, what would break first?

2. FIXING THE DATA PROBLEM

What we heard

The more the discussions moved into AI, forecasting and technology, the more they came back to the same point: data quality. Several treasurers were not questioning whether new tools could help. They were questioning whether the underlying information was good enough to make those tools useful in the first place.

This was not just an AI issue. It touched cash forecasting, reporting, bank connectivity, ERP limitations, TMS implementation and decision-making. The practical question was simple: before we ask technology to do more, do we trust the data it is working from?

The questions underneath the discussion were:

- Where does data still need manual fixing?
- Where do different systems tell different stories?
- Are we solving a technology problem or a data problem?

Reflection

Which data sources do you trust least today?

Where does your team spend time cleaning, checking or reworking data?

What is one data issue you could fix before adding more technology?

3. MODERNISING TREASURY TECHNOLOGY

What we heard

Across the rooms, technology was discussed less as a shiny new investment and more as a question of resilience. Several treasury teams are still heavily reliant on spreadsheets, banking portals, manual uploads or ERP systems that were never really designed around treasury needs.

The discussion was not simply about buying a new system. It was about understanding where existing processes create risk, delay or unnecessary manual work. In many cases, technology modernisation was really a conversation about control, visibility and confidence.

The questions underneath the discussion were:

- Which processes are still too manual?
- Where is the current technology creating risk?
- Which system gap causes the most pain?

Reflection

Which treasury process would benefit most from better technology?

Where are you relying on spreadsheets or manual uploads today?

What would you prioritise if you could only fix one system issue this year?

4. IMPROVING CASH FORECASTING

What we heard

Cash forecasting came up repeatedly, but not always in the same way. For some teams it was about better systems. For others it was about getting more reliable inputs from the business, aligning assumptions or understanding why one part of the organisation forecasts better than another.

The common theme was that forecasting is rarely just a treasury problem. It depends on data quality, business ownership, consistency and the ability to turn numbers into a useful conversation. The challenge is not simply producing a forecast. It is producing one that people trust and act on.

The questions underneath the discussion were:

- Who really owns the forecast inputs?
- Where do the biggest errors usually come from?
- How much confidence does the business have in the output?

Reflection

Which part of your forecasting process causes the most frustration?

Who needs to be more engaged in improving the forecast?

What would make your forecast more useful to the CFO or board?

5. TURNING AI INTO PRACTICAL VALUE

What we heard

The AI discussion was refreshingly practical. The questions were not about whether AI will transform treasury in theory. They were about where to start, what quick wins exist, which tasks are safe to automate, and how to avoid creating more risk than value.

Several examples focused on high-volume, manual work such as file reformatting, KYC, bank statement processing, reporting support and data preparation. The strongest message was that AI needs to be applied to real problems, not introduced simply because everyone is talking about it.

The questions underneath the discussion were:

- Where could AI remove manual effort today?
- Which tasks are high volume but low risk?
- How will you check the output before trusting it?

Reflection

What is one practical AI use case your team could test safely?

What controls would need to be in place before using it more widely?

Where might AI be filling a gap that a better system should already solve?

6. MANAGING GROWING COMPLEXITY

What we heard

Complexity appeared in almost every stream. M&A, new ownership structures, cross-border cash movement, different financing arrangements, global banking relationships and changing business models all add layers that treasury has to manage.

What made the discussions useful was that people were not talking about complexity in the abstract. They were talking about practical pressure points: integration after acquisition, repatriating cash, managing debt across jurisdictions, dealing with different cultures and keeping control when the business keeps changing.

The questions underneath the discussion were:

- Where has the business become harder to manage?
- Which structures no longer match how treasury needs to operate?
- Where are decisions being slowed down by complexity?

Reflection

What has become significantly more complex in the past two years?

Where are the biggest bottlenecks in your current structure?

Which process would you redesign if you were starting again today?

7. PROTECTING TREASURY FROM EMERGING RISKS

What we heard

The risk discussion moved well beyond traditional FX, interest rate and liquidity risks. Treasurers were also talking about cyber threats, AI-enabled fraud, deepfakes, insurance availability, regulatory change, sanctions, AML, operational resilience and the challenge of keeping track across multiple jurisdictions.

The practical concern was not whether treasury understands risk. It was whether the risk landscape is changing faster than treasury processes, systems and controls can adapt. That makes prioritisation critical. Not every risk can be solved at once, but the most important ones need clear ownership.

The questions underneath the discussion were:

- Which risks have changed fastest?
- Where are controls still too manual?
- Who owns emerging risks that cut across treasury, IT, legal and finance?

Reflection

Which emerging risk worries you most today?

Where are you least confident in your current controls?

Who needs to be involved in strengthening your response?

8. LEARNING FROM PEERS

What we heard

Perhaps the strongest theme was that treasurers wanted to learn from each other. The real value was not another presentation. It was hearing what people across the table were actually doing, what was working, what was proving difficult and what they might do differently next time.

That is why the roundtable format worked. The agenda was not imposed on the room. The challenges came from the people sitting around the table. That gave the discussions a practical edge and created the kind of benchmarking that is hard to get from a stage presentation.

The questions underneath the discussion were:

- Who do you learn from outside your own organisation?
- Where do you benchmark ideas and approaches?
- How often do you challenge your thinking with peers?

Reflection

Which peer conversation would help you most right now?

Who could you reconnect with in your treasury network?

What topic would you most value discussing with peers in future?

About The Treasury Recruitment Company

The Treasury Recruitment Company recruits treasury specialists at every level, from Treasury Analyst to Group Treasurer.

Established in 2002, we support permanent, contract and interim recruitment across the global treasury market, working with corporate and professional services clients across the UK, Europe, the USA, Canada, Middle East, Far East and Australasia.

Our role is simple: to help treasury professionals and treasury teams make better people decisions, whether that means hiring, benchmarking, planning a career move or finding the right specialist support.

How we can help

If one of the challenges in this Playbook feels familiar, we can help you think through what it means for your team, your career or your hiring plans.

- Permanent, contract and interim treasury recruitment
- Dedicated retained search for senior treasury appointments
- Salary benchmarking and market insight
- Advice on team structure, succession planning and skills gaps
- Career support for treasury professionals considering their next move
- Introductions to relevant treasury peers, moderators and trusted partners

Contact us

Whether you are hiring, planning your next move, or simply want to talk through what these themes mean for your treasury team, please do get in touch.

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If you are perhaps looking to benchmark your salary in the current market - take part in our **Global Treasury Salary Survey** via www.TreasurySalary.com. It only takes a few minutes and as a thank you for taking part, you will gain exclusive and FREE access to salary benchmarks at all levels from Treasury Analyst to Group Treasurer.

PS Our podcast at www.TheTreasuryCareerCorner.com might be interesting to you too!

How To Use This Playbook

This Playbook is designed to give treasury professionals a practical way to reflect on the themes and compare them with their own priorities.

Use the Stop, Start, Continue format below to think about what should change in your own treasury team, your current priorities or future peer discussions.

STOP

What should your treasury team stop doing?

START

What should your treasury team start doing to make progress?

CONTINUE

What should your treasury team continue doing because it works well?

Thank you for reading and for being part of the wider treasury community.

Let us know if any of the challenges in this playbook are areas where you would value a follow-up conversation with us.

And if you would like to talk through your own treasury career, your team structure, or the market more broadly, please get in touch.