

# How fragmented spending destroys financial visibility *(and how to fix it).*





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When spending is scattered, control disappears. Shared cards, personal reimbursements, and ad-hoc payments might feel convenient, but they create blind spots that lead to budget surprises, compliance risks, and endless reconciliation headaches. The good news? You can restore clarity without slowing your teams down.

Fragmented spending can start innocently: shared cards for convenience, personal reimbursements to avoid delays, a card on file for SaaS tools. But what looks like agility often undermines control.

Without central oversight, every transaction becomes a blind spot. Over time, these gaps erode financial visibility, distort budgets, and expose companies to compliance risks, leaving finance leaders reactive instead of strategic.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Today's spend management tools make it possible to combine speed with control, giving finance teams real-time visibility, automated reconciliation, and built-in safeguards without slowing down the business. With the right approach, agility and accountability can work hand in hand.

## What is fragmented spending?

Fragmented spending happens when payments are spread across multiple cards, people, or systems without a central layer of control. Common examples include:

### Common patterns include:

- **Shared corporate cards:** rather than issuing unique cards per employee or vendor, several teams or people use the same few cards, often passing them around as needed.
- **Personal cards and reimbursements:** employees use their own cards for business purchases and later seek reimbursement, or pay vendors ad-hoc and reconcile later.
- **Disconnected spend tracking:** when spending isn't managed with a unified expense or procurement system and instead dispersed into different spreadsheets, manual reimbursements, or separate accounting tools.

What starts as a way to move fast can erode into a lack of visibility, control, and efficiency over time.

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## The risks lurking in every transaction.

Distributed spending introduces a set of hidden, but material, costs for businesses. When finance teams can't see spending in real time, every transaction becomes a blind spot.

The top risks are:

- **Lost visibility:** Budgets get blown before anyone notices.
- **Data fragmentation and reconciliation nightmares:** Manual chasing of receipts, fixing errors, and data silos that slow workflows.
- **Overspending:** Unapproved purchases and unnoticed renewals.
- **Compliance risks:** Fraud and policy breaches slip through.

Let's break each of these down.





## Lost visibility and delayed insight.

When payments happen via shared cards or outside of a central system, finance teams often only see spend after month end when statements arrive or expense reports are submitted.

### That means:

- Budgets may have already been exceeded.
- Unexpected vendor subscription renewals or discretionary spending may have occurred without prior approval.
- Sudden cash-flow pressures go unnoticed until they are urgent.

Delayed insight doesn't just slow finance down, it limits strategic decision-making. Without timely data, forecasting becomes guesswork, and opportunities to improve spend are missed. Real-time visibility isn't a luxury; it's the foundation for smarter budgeting, stronger compliance, and confident growth.

**In short:** Unchecked fragmented spending turns every department into a blind spot, until the bill arrives.





## Data fragmentation and reconciliation nightmares.

When payments and spend are managed across multiple systems, cards, expenses, procurement, and accounting all living in separate platforms and finance teams lose a single source of truth. Without automated tracking and centrally managed records, spend data doesn't flow seamlessly and must be manually stitched together. Only 9% of North American businesses have a fully automated reconciliation system while 31% are reconciling expenses through an entirely or mostly manual process<sup>1</sup>. In Australia, new research shows 80% still rely on manual processes to manage expenses, increasing the risk of errors, inefficiencies and delays. In the UK, 15% of businesses are fully automated and 21% entirely or mostly manual.

This means finance is left chasing receipts, matching expenses to projects or departments, following up on missing documentation, and correcting avoidable errors. Each card transaction is effectively managed in isolation, leading to fragmented data, inconsistent classification, and delayed expense reporting.

The result is a slow, manual, and error-prone process that adds unnecessary admin to already stretched teams. As spend grows, with more vendors, subscriptions, and distributed teams, these inefficiencies compound, dragging out month-end close and reducing financial visibility.

**In short:** Finance teams spend months reconciling fragmented data across multiple platforms instead of focusing on analysis, forecasting, and strategic financial planning.



## Budget overruns and overspending.

Without real-time visibility into business spend, discretionary and unapproved purchases can easily slip through. This is especially true with cards, where transactions often occur outside approved budgets. Think Meta ad campaigns running unchecked, AI tool subscriptions renewing automatically, or software as a service (SaaS) platforms like Slack and Zoom quietly adding up. Small expenses can quickly snowball into significant overspend.

Without proactive guardrails, spend management becomes reactive instead of preventive.

**In short:** Weak controls don't just create small leaks. They allow overspending, unapproved purchases, and unnoticed renewals to quietly erode budgets before finance has a chance to intervene.





## Increased risks of fraud and compliance issues.

Fragmented spend through shared or personal cards increases the risk of misuse, including accidental personal charges and undetected fraud. Without proactive oversight, corporate cards can lead to policy breaches and costly compliance issues, with unauthorized purchases typically discovered only after finance reviews transactions.

This concern is reflected in the data. In recent OFX reports, 15% of North American finance leaders said they are not confident their business has adequate controls in place to prevent fraudulent transactions, while 45% reported an increased focus on security and fraud-prevention expectations over the past 12 months.<sup>1</sup> In the UK, 49% of CFOs say that security or data privacy is their biggest issue in managing expenses, with a further 6% of finance leaders saying they don't feel confidence.<sup>2</sup> In Australia, 52% of Australian businesses say security and data protection are the most important features they consider when choosing a spend management solution.<sup>3</sup>

**In short:** Fragmented spending increases exposure to fraud and policy breaches, leaving businesses vulnerable to unapproved transactions and compliance risks before finance has a chance to intervene.

**Not sure if your business may already be experiencing fragmented spend?** As we've explored, fragmented spend often creeps in quietly. It doesn't start as a problem, just a few cards here, a new vendor there, another system added to support a growing team. But over time, those small decisions add up.

If any of the following feel familiar, it may be time to reassess how spend is managed across your business. Fill out our spend scorecard to discover the strength of your spend control.



## The path to restoration: full visibility and control.

The good news is distributed spend doesn't have to be the default. And fixing it doesn't mean going back to slow manual purchase orders or rigid approval chains that frustrate teams.

Instead, finance teams are turning to modern tools that build control directly into the payment method itself. Fragmented spend often relies on shared corporate or personal cards.

A powerful spend management platform coupled with card oversight replaces those workarounds with smarter and more transparent options. The OFX Global Business Account paired with OFX Corporate Cards does all that and more:

- **Dedicated virtual or physical corporate cards for employees or vendors.** Each spend commitment has its own card, creating a clear audit trail from the start. For example, you can assign separate cards for recurring subscriptions like SaaS tools (Slack, Zoom, or Salesforce), cloud services (AWS or Azure), and marketing platforms (Google Ads or HubSpot). This approach makes it easy to track expenses by category and prevent overlap or misuse.
- **Spend limits.** Limits are set when the card is issued, so overspending is prevented rather than fixed later.
- **Real-time visibility and control.** Finance can see spend as it happens and instantly freeze or cancel a card if something looks wrong.

When the payment method becomes the control point, finance teams move out of firefighting mode. Instead of chasing issues after the fact, they can support teams with faster, safer spending and clearer oversight.





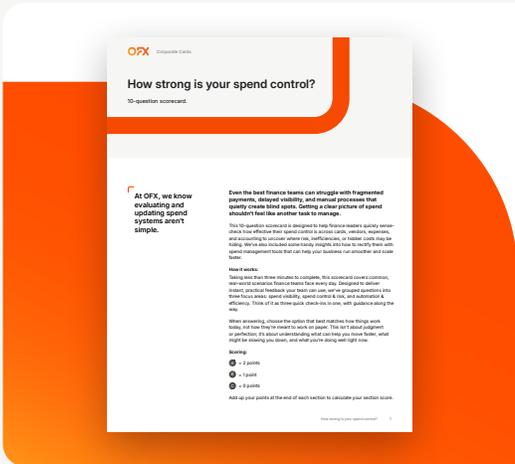
## What finance leaders can do next.

If you are a finance leader dealing with slow reconciliations, unknown subscriptions, or recurring policy breaches, you are not alone. These are common signals that spend has outgrown your current processes.

Here are practical next steps to regain control:

- **Review your current setup:** Look at how many shared cards exist, how often personal reimbursements occur, and where manual spreadsheets are still in use.
- **Identify the biggest pain points:** Focus on reconciliation time, speed of month-end close, overspend frequency, subscription sprawl, and audit readiness.
- **Evaluate modern spend management solutions:** Look out for platforms that combine virtual corporate cards, real-time controls, and direct integration with your accounting system, like OFX's spend management solutions.
- **Start with a pilot:** Test the approach in one team such as marketing or vendor payments. Issue virtual cards with clear limits and connect them to your ledger.
- **Scale with confidence:** Once visibility, efficiency, and control improve, roll it out across the business.

Small changes at the payment level often deliver big gains for finance teams.



Scorecard

# Discover your spend control strength with our quick scorecard.

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## Balancing convenience and control.

Fragmented spend often starts with speed and convenience, but over time it creates blind spots, budget leaks, compliance risk, and mounting admin for finance.

As businesses scale, these issues multiply across teams, vendors, and subscriptions. The fix is not slowing down. It is using modern spend management with integrated expense or accounting tools to deliver real-time visibility, built-in controls, and automatic reconciliation.

If budgets feel unpredictable or reconciliation keeps getting harder, broken spend processes are likely the cause. Unifying spend is one of the fastest ways to regain control.

1. This research was commissioned by OFX and conducted by market research specialist Vitreous World. The anonymous survey took place online from August 4-13, 2025. 300 SMB finance leaders in the United States and Canada were surveyed across industries including retail, eCommerce, software, tech, media, advertising and marketing, hospitality, and more.

2. From Complexity to Control. This research was commissioned by OFX and conducted by market research specialist Vitreous World. The anonymous survey took place online from 8-16 April 2025. 150 SME finance leaders in the UK were surveyed across industries including retail, eCommerce, software, tech, media, advertising and marketing, hospitality, and more.

3. 'From manual drag to strategic finance'. This research was commissioned by OFX and conducted by market research specialist Vitreous World. The anonymous survey took place online in October, 2025. 500 SMB finance leaders in Australia were surveyed across industries including retail, eCommerce, software, tech, media, advertising and marketing, hospitality, and more.

## Ready to stop chasing receipts and start controlling spend?

Get started →

