



LET'S KEEP TALKING!

The plan looked better standing still



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A decision only looks simple until it has to be made.

For years that distinction did not matter. In corporate lending, a facility represented trust while a limit defined a boundary. Once approved, the assumption was simple. You could operate freely within it.

That assumption is starting to break. I've seen this play out more often recently, especially once transactions actually start moving. Not because lending is weakening. Because it is becoming more precise and more aligned with how risk actually behaves.

The moment where “approved” stops meaning what you think

A supplier payment is ready. The counterparty is known. The economics make sense. The facility covers it. There is no reason to hesitate. And yet something pauses. Not in theory, but in the actual moment the payment is initiated. It does not trigger alarm. It creates doubt.

Someone asks a simple question. Why is this being checked? That question used to signal inefficiency. Now it signals something deeper. The system is no longer asking whether the borrower can be trusted. It is asking whether this specific payment makes sense right now. That is a very different question.

We split lending and payments. Risk never followed the rules

Corporate finance was designed in layers. Lending determines how much capital can be accessed. Payments determine how money moves through treasury and operations. The structure is logical. Reality is not. Risk does not sit in a credit file. It appears in the flow of money itself.

A company can be strong and still generate very different exposures. One payment may be backed by contracted receivables from an investment-grade buyer. Another may fund uncertain inventory. A third may stretch working capital at exactly the wrong moment. The borrower stays the same. The risk changes every time.

For years this mismatch was accepted because managing it differently was too complex. That constraint no longer exists.

Credit has quietly moved into the moment of payment

In theory, credit decisions happen before capital is deployed. In practice, they are moving into the exact moment it is used. Data updates continuously. Systems respond in real time. Signals evolve instantly.

When a payment is initiated, the system can run liquidity checks and reassess counterparties and analyse behaviour against recent cash flow patterns. All of this happens within the transaction itself. The implication is clear. The payment is no longer just execution. It is where credit is decided.

This shift isn't failing. Our operating model is.

This evolution is logical. The technology exists. The capability is real. So why has it not fully landed? Because most organisations are still built around assumptions that no longer hold. The gap is not technical. It is structural.

The organisation was never designed for this

Payments and lending still sit in separate domains. They have different teams and different systems and different incentives across treasury, risk, and operations. Payments optimise for speed. Lending optimises for control. Execution happens in one place. Decisioning happens in another. This separation creates friction.

Real time credit cannot fully exist in that structure. Not because it is impossible, but because the organisation was never designed for continuous decisioning at the point of transaction.

The technology exists. The system does not

Most institutions already have the components. Real time data from ERP, cash positions, and accounts is available. Risk models are advanced. Infrastructure is modern. What is missing is integration.

Decisioning remains fragmented across origination, monitoring, and servicing. Insight and action are not connected. Money moves instantly. Judgement still happens in stages. That mismatch is what holds the model back.

We are still solving for yesterday's problem

The concept of a credit limit is simple and reassuring. It creates clarity for lenders and borrowers alike. It also hides complexity. A £10M facility says very little about the risk in a single £1M supplier payment.

A limit assumes that all uses of capital carry similar risk. We know that is not true. Yet most systems still behave as if it is. Even as decisioning becomes more dynamic, the mental model remains static. And that gap quietly slows everything down.

Our interfaces are stuck in a binary world

Most systems are designed for binary outcomes. Approved or declined. Real time decisioning introduces nuance.

A payment can be partially funded. It can be conditional. It can be structured dynamically depending on counterparty and timing. Existing interfaces struggle to reflect this. So the capability exists. But the experience cannot support it.

What's missing: the layer that decides in real time

The future does not belong to lending or payments alone. It belongs to what connects them. A unified decision layer that sits inside the payment flow and understands context in real time and applies capital accordingly.

For corporate lending, this means credit moves closer to treasury and execution, rather than sitting solely within approval structures. This is not coordination. It is integration.

Payments are turning into credit decisions in motion

When that layer exists, the nature of a payment changes. It is no longer just a transfer of funds. It becomes a structured financial decision.

A transaction can be partially funded and priced dynamically and split across sources of capital. What looks simple is anything but. Each payment becomes a sequence of decisions. Each decision reflects a specific risk profile. Each one behaves like a micro extension of credit. The payment and the loan collapse into one.

The advantage is already shifting quietly

Control used to come from owning capital. Now it comes from deciding how capital is applied. The most important moment is the point of transaction. It is where context is richest and timing matters most. The organisations that sit closest to treasury flows and payment execution gain advantage.

This is why platforms and fintech infrastructure players are becoming more influential. They sit directly inside the decision flow.

A question most organisations have not truly answered

What would change if payments and lending were fully integrated within corporate environments?

Would risk be identified earlier. Would treasury operate differently. Would capital be deployed with more precision. Most organisations already have the components. Few have connected them into a single operating model.

The shift most people haven't fully seen yet

For years, lending was treated as judgement. Payments were treated as execution. That distinction is disappearing. In corporate lending, payments are becoming moments of judgement. The loan no longer exists before the transaction. It comes into existence at the moment the payment is made.

If this feels familiar, you are already seeing the shift

If you work in corporate lending or treasury or financial infrastructure, this shift is already underway. The question is not whether it will happen. It is where you sit when it does.

Are you shaping decisions or reacting to them? Are your systems built to collaborate, or ready to integrate?

This is where the next phase of advantage will come from.

... Let's keep talking!



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Chris Hagen brings over 25 years of international leadership experience across the financial services and technology sectors, with a proven track record in strategic transformation, operational excellence, and value-driven change.

Before joining Finastra in 2026, Chris held leadership and subject matter expert positions at Oracle, Standard Chartered Bank, Deutsche Bank, and DZ Bank, driving global transformation programs across APAC, EMEA and North America.

A trusted advisor to C-Suite and senior executives on data modernisation, transformation roadmaps and value realisation, with expertise in linking business architectures with enterprise platforms to unlock value from digital, AI and cloud investments.

A recognised thought leader and frequent speaker at global conferences and industry forums, Chris holds degrees from the London School of Economics and the Singapore Institute of Management.