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Navigating the U.S. Payments Evolution

Automation, Innovation, and the Road Ahead

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Insights for a New Era of Money Movement

The U.S. payments ecosystem is evolving at an unprecedented pace, driven by technological advancements, shifting consumer expectations, and regulatory changes. To stay competitive, businesses must align payment innovations with broader strategic goals to ensure seamless, secure, and customer-centric operations.

While new capabilities such as artificial intelligence (AI) and faster payment methods are making headlines, their real value lies in integration within an efficient payment infrastructure. This whitepaper explores six key trends shaping the future of payments in 2025 and beyond. It also provides a strategic roadmap to help businesses leverage these trends effectively, fostering resilience and long-term growth in an increasingly complex market.

Key Trends

Six Key Trends Defining an Evolving Payments Ecosystem

01 Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable Automation

02 Increased Use of AI in Fraud Prevention and Cybersecurity

03 B2B Payment Modernization and Enhanced Data Capabilities

04 Integrated and Embedded Payments with Orchestration

05 Real-Time Payments (RTP) with Instant Settlement

06 Digital Wallet Proliferation

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Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable Automation

The rise of AR and AP automation highlights the urgent need to address inefficiencies in manual processes. A recent study found that most companies spend between 10 and 14 hours per month on manual AR processes. Over the course of a year, this equates to three to four weeks — time that could be better spent on strategic initiatives.[1]

Businesses are fine-tuning their AR & AP processes as they adopt technology that enhances efficiency, improves cash flow, and creates a seamless customer experience. The convergence of AR and AP into unified platforms reflects the growing demand for integrated, orchestrated solutions that provide a comprehensive view of financial operations.

Top Barriers to Payment Automation

Despite increasing momentum for automation, organizations still face challenges such as IT availability or priorities (58%), system limitations (49%), and management priorities (28%).[2]

IT Availability or Priorities

58%

System Limitations or Restrictions

49%

Management Priorities

28%

Available Capacity of Payment Staff

26%

[1] *AR Processes A&U Study, September 2024*   [2] *2024 AP Automation Readiness Research*

Notable Developments

Automation as the Foundation: Automating tasks such as invoicing, payment reminders, and reconciliation reduces errors and frees up resources for higher-value initiatives. Automation is crucial for managing this growth efficiently.

AI as the Catalyst for Smarter Processes: AI is transforming AP and AR automation, not as a standalone tool but as an intelligence layer that enhances automation. By introducing predictive capabilities, fraud detection, and intelligent decision-making, AI elevates AP/AR operations from simple task automation to sophisticated, data-driven workflows that adapt to business needs.

Integration as a Driver: Companies are increasingly seeking unified solutions that consolidate multiple payment types, integrate AP/AR with payment processing, and enhance fraud prevention and financial analytics. These integrated solutions provide businesses with a seamless, efficient, and scalable financial ecosystem.
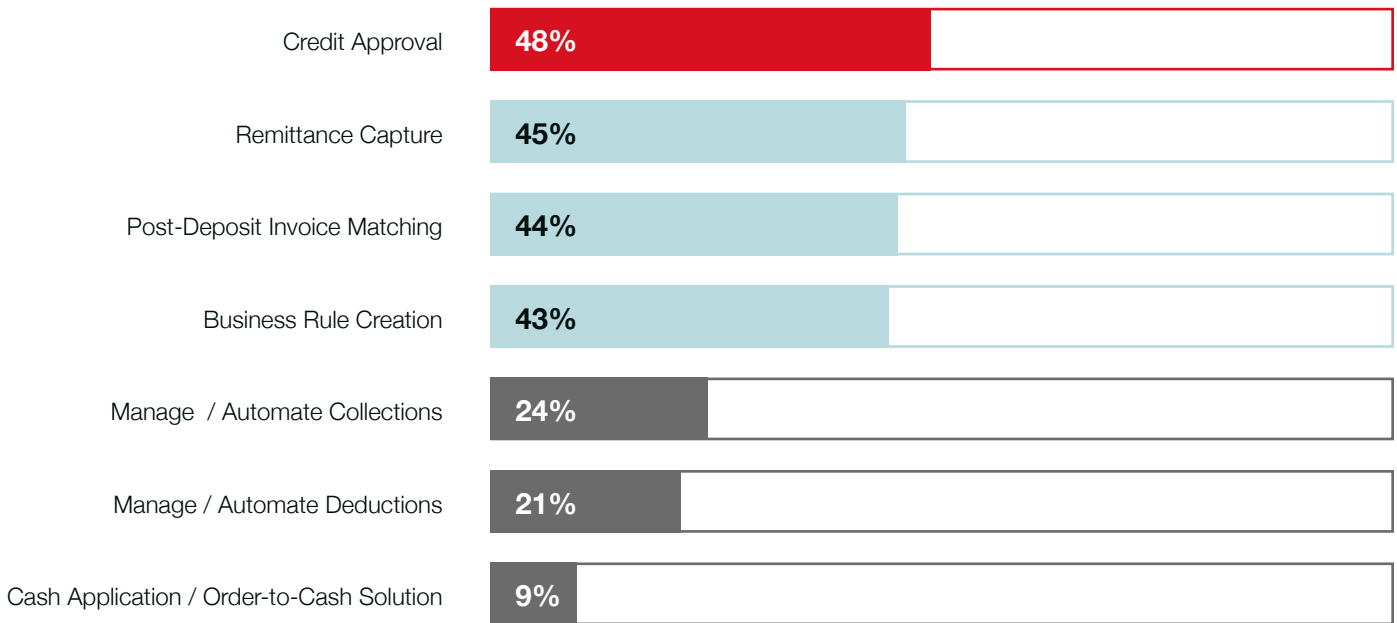
3/4 of firms

expect more invoices through AR systems in the future.[3]

Manual AR Processes[4]

In a recent survey by Deluxe, mid-market finance teams indicated that many critical steps within their A/R processes still require manual processes. When surveyed, the top areas for manual work include:

Process	Percentage
Credit Approval	48%
Remittance Capture	45%
Post-Deposit Invoice Matching	44%
Business Rule Creation	43%
Manage / Automate Collections	24%
Manage / Automate Deductions	21%
Cash Application / Order-to-Cash Solution	9%

[3] *Accounts Payable and Receivable Trends and Path to Profitability Report*   [4] *AR Processes A&U Study, September 2024*
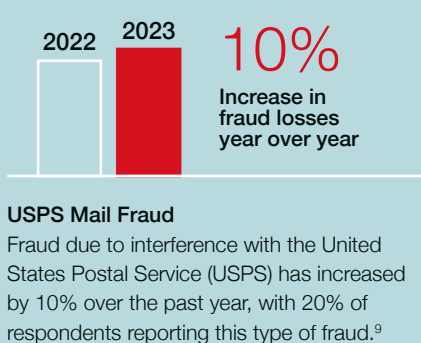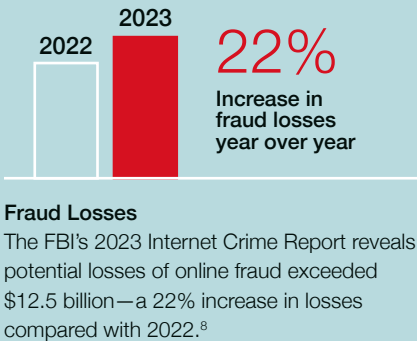
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Increased Use of AI in Fraud Prevention and Cybersecurity

Fraud detection is rapidly evolving, with payment processors and financial institutions investing heavily in AI-powered anomaly detection to identify potential fraud in real time. The 2024 AI, Fraud, and Financial Crime Survey found that nearly three-quarters (73%) of organizations use AI for fraud protection, while 69% believe AI will generate more revenue than losses.[5]

Merchant fraud is escalating alongside consumer fraud, with attackers becoming increasingly sophisticated. To counter these threats, financial institutions and payment processors are deploying intelligent exception tools that analyze thousands of transactions per second, detecting anomalies and proactively flagging or halting suspicious activity.

The effectiveness of these tools is driven by advancements in machine learning (ML) algorithms, which can identify fraud patterns within transaction data. According to the Global Identity & Fraud Report 2024, nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents consider ML-based fraud detection the most effective tool available.[6]

Key Statistics from Companies Surveyed about Fraud Losses

33%

view fraud as a top operational challenge for their organization in the next year.[7]

2022 **2023**

22%
Increase in fraud losses year over year

Fraud Losses
The FBI's 2023 Internet Crime Report reveals potential losses of online fraud exceeded $12.5 billion—a 22% increase in losses compared with 2022.[8]

2022 **2023**

10%
Increase in fraud losses year over year

USPS Mail Fraud
Fraud due to interference with the United States Postal Service (USPS) has increased by 10% over the past year, with 20% of respondents reporting this type of fraud.[9]

[5] BioCatch: 2024 AI, Fraud, and Financial Crime Survey: AI's Role in Perpetrating and Fighting Financial Crime
[6] Experian: Global Identity & Fraud Report 2024   [7] Strategic Treasurer 2024 Treasury Perspectives Survey
[8] FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center 2023 Internet Crime Report   [9] AFP: The 2024 AFP Payments Fraud and Control Survey Report

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B2B Payment Modernization and Enhanced Data Capabilities

Across the payments industry, banks and their corporate clients are prioritizing ways to extract greater value from their payment processes. Investments in platforms that consolidate and analyze payment data across multiple channels are becoming essential. These solutions provide real-time insights, enabling banks and businesses to make more informed, data-driven decisions.

Payment providers and financial institutions are also strengthening their data capabilities to serve as more effective partners, helping businesses consolidate and analyze payments with greater efficiency. By leveraging transaction data, organizations can make smarter decisions while integrating predictive analytics to uncover cross-sell and upsell opportunities.

Additionally, institutions are expanding supplier digital network capabilities to optimize secure payments based on supplier preferences. These solutions share near real-time data, automate payment processing, and enhance security across supplier/customer ecosystems. AI-powered networks analyze vast transaction volumes to optimize routing based on supplier preference, instantly detect fraud, and improve payment efficiency. As businesses and financial institutions modernize their infrastructure, these networks will enable seamless interoperability, fostering a frictionless, secure, and highly adaptable payments landscape.

Common Gaps in Payment Processes[10]

In a recent study by Datos Insights, the most common automation gaps in payment processes for corporate finance teams include:

Speed of Payment / Settlement

46%

Real-Time Visibility of Payment Transactions

44%

Integration of Payments Data into ERP/Accounting Systems

42%

Recipient Satisfaction

34%

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Many banks now offer automated tools to help businesses reconcile payments and receivables, providing near-instant insights that improve cash flow forecasting. This shift highlights a broader industry evolution — payments are no longer just a method of moving money; **they have become a strategic function that delivers enhanced, data-driven business experiences.**

[10] *Datos Insights Top Trends in Commercial Banking and Payments, 2025*

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Integrated and Embedded Payments with Orchestration

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Embedded payments are no longer optional — they are essential for businesses seeking to create seamless, frictionless transaction experiences. The 2024 State of Embedded Finance Report projects a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 23.8% from 2024 to 2029, with revenue from embedded finance expected to reach $89.59 billion annually by 2029, up from $30.82 billion in 2024.[11]

Unified Portals are Driving Efficiency

By consolidating multiple payment methods into a single interface, these portals provide businesses with greater transaction control and visibility.

To navigate the complexities of embedded payments, finance teams must implement unified tools capable of managing multiple payment methods efficiently. These solutions, including unified payment portals and digital wallets, enable centralized control, streamline cash flow management, and enhance collaboration with fintech partners to embed payments into existing ecosystems.

Digital Wallets Meet Shopper Requirements

Digital wallets offer a fast, secure, and convenient payment option, reducing cart abandonment and increasing customer satisfaction. Their integration supports omnichannel payment experiences that align with customer preferences, fostering engagement and loyalty.

When surveyed, corporate finance teams ranked the following items as most impactful in improving their AP efficiency:

Moving Payment Volume to EFT / ACH

58%

Adding Automated Account Validation Services

51%

Integrated Payment File

44%

Use of AI or ML

20%

Moving Payment Volume to Virtual Card

14%

Outsourcing

13%

Integrated Payments *provide a unified view of all payment rails within a seamless user experience.*
Embedded Payments *seamlessly integrate payments into workflows and customer experiences, offering invisible, effortless payment options. Embedding payments allow consumer preferences to show up everywhere they transact.*
[11] United States Embedded Finance Business and Investment Opportunities Databook Q2 2024 Update

Real-Time Payments with Instant Settlement

Real-time payments (RTP) with instant settlement are among the fastest-growing payment innovations, offering speedier transactions, enhanced security, and richer data with each payment. A key driver of this growth is the global shift toward cashless economies. Forrester's *Predictions 2025 Payments* report anticipates that cash usage worldwide will fall 40% in 2025, reinforcing the momentum behind RTP adoption.[12]

As RTP with instant settlement becomes more widespread, multiple RTP rails and networks are emerging. However, for businesses to fully capitalize on RTP's benefits, both the payer and the receiver must use a processor that integrates RTP into their payment operations.
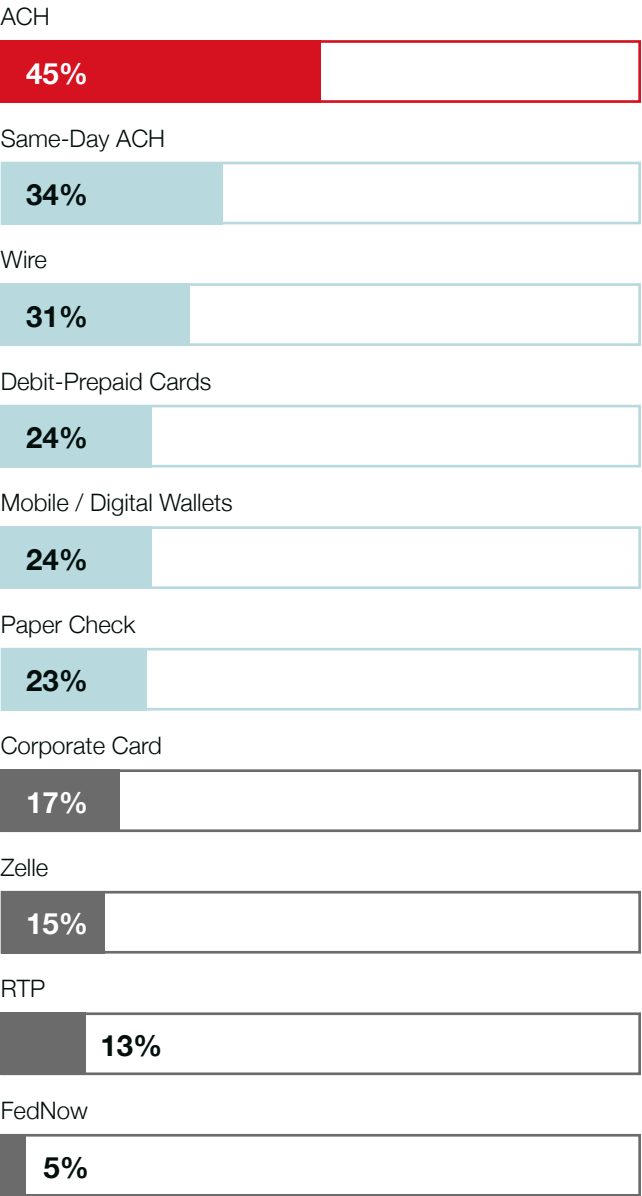
Finance teams should anticipate new RTP rails adding complexity to accounts receivable (AR) reconciliation. While RTP accelerates transaction speed, it does not automatically improve reconciliation unless fully integrated into AR workflows. This underscores the importance of embedding RTP seamlessly with other payment methods to maximize efficiency and financial visibility.

The *Datos Insights Top Trends in Commercial Banking and Payments 2025* report found that **60% of businesses expect to increase their use of real-time payments within the next 12 to 24 months.**

How Consumers are Paying

ACH
45%

Same-Day ACH
34%

Wire
31%

Debit-Prepaid Cards
24%

Mobile / Digital Wallets
24%

Paper Check
23%

Corporate Card
17%

Zelle
15%

RTP
13%

FedNow
5%

[12] *Forrester Predictions 2025: Payments*

Digital Wallet Proliferation

Digital wallets, such as Apple Pay, Google Pay, and PayPal, continue to gain traction as preferred payment methods for small businesses and consumers. They are essential for managing in-store, online, and peer-to-peer (P2P) transactions, while also expanding into cross-border payments and cryptocurrency management, ensuring global adaptability.

As the shift toward a cashless society accelerates, digital wallets play a crucial role in enabling seamless, secure, and convenient transactions for businesses. A McKinsey study found that 74% of U.S. consumers and 71% of European consumers cite faster, easier checkouts as the primary reason for using digital wallets. Additionally, one in five digital wallet users now leave their physical wallets at home, confident they can transact digitally.[13]

Key Insights

Businesses are increasingly accepting digital wallets because they reduce transaction costs and provide valuable insights into customer behavior.

Digital wallets enhance security by leveraging encryption, tokenization, and biometric authentication, minimizing fraud risk and chargebacks to protect both businesses and their customers.

By providing secure and frictionless payment experiences, digital wallets help reduce cart abandonment and strengthen customer loyalty.
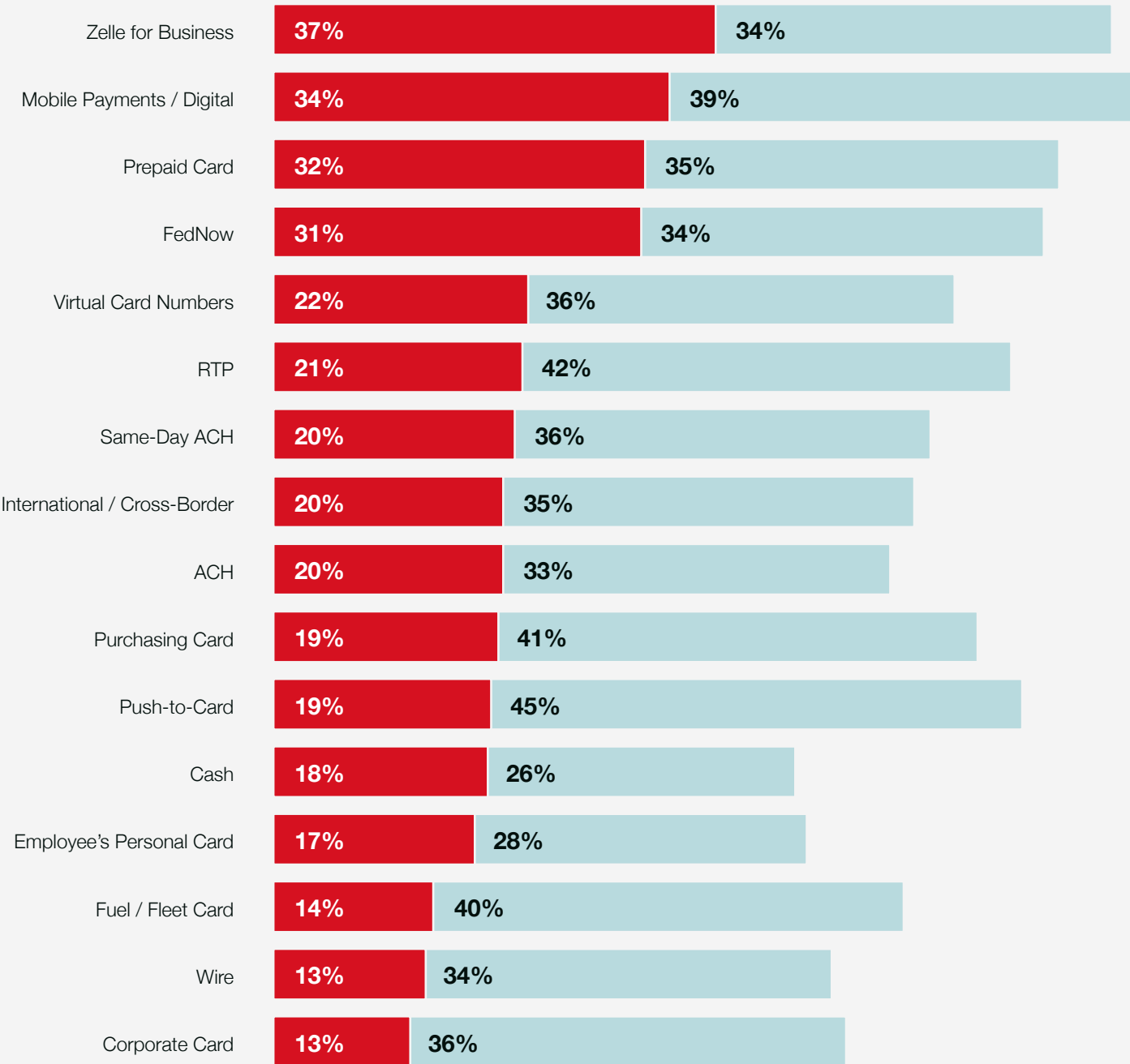
[13] *McKinsey & Company: State of Consumer Digital Payments in 2024*

Market Insights[14]

Thinking about the number of transactions, how do you think your organization's usage of the following payment tools is likely to change over the next 12 months? *(N=300)*

● Significant Increase
● Some Increase

Payment Tool	Significant Increase	Some Increase
Zelle for Business	37%	34%
Mobile Payments / Digital	34%	39%
Prepaid Card	32%	35%
FedNow	31%	34%
Virtual Card Numbers	22%	36%
RTP	21%	42%
Same-Day ACH	20%	36%
International / Cross-Border	20%	35%
ACH	20%	33%
Purchasing Card	19%	41%
Push-to-Card	19%	45%
Cash	18%	26%
Employee's Personal Card	17%	28%
Fuel / Fleet Card	14%	40%
Wire	13%	34%
Corporate Card	13%	36%

[14] *Datos Insights: Payment Trends and ISO 20022 Update, October 2024*

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Strategic Recommendations

Businesses should take a strategic, phased approach to adopting new capabilities, ensuring each step aligns with their current operational maturity and long-term objectives. By implementing these trends incrementally — starting with foundational improvements and progressing toward more advanced solutions — organizations can drive sustainable growth, maximize ROI, and stay agile in an evolving market. **Our recommended roadmap includes:**
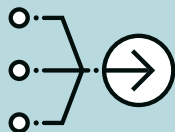
Automate Payables and Receivables

Eliminate manual effort and enhance efficiency by building a scalable cash flow and data management foundation. Consolidate payment types into a single interface for streamlined reconciliation and improved visibility.

Partner for Unified Payment Experiences

Work closely with banks and AP/AR providers to integrate multiple payment types into seamless, end-to-end workflows.

Leverage AI for Fraud Prevention and Insights

Deploy advanced fraud detection tools and utilize data intelligence to strengthen security and enhance decision-making.

Develop Intelligent Workflows

Continuously refine operations by integrating AI, machine learning (ML), and emerging payment technologies into a more connected, adaptive system.

Collaborate with payment and AP/AR providers to incrementally enhance automation with AI-driven capabilities, driving continuous improvements and long-term value.

Embracing a Future-Ready Payment Strategy

These six key trends highlight the importance of strategically integrating innovation into business operations. By leveraging automation, AI, and embedded payment solutions, organizations can enhance efficiency, strengthen security, and elevate customer experiences — positioning themselves for sustained success in a rapidly evolving market.

To stay competitive and drive value in an increasingly digital economy, stakeholders across the payments ecosystem must embrace these advancements. Doing so will ensure that U.S. payments remain resilient, innovative, and future-ready.

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