



BUILD RECAP · FOR THE TALK

The CFO Margin Dashboard — how it got built, and how it was steered

A reconciled CFO dashboard assembled from **Campfire** (revenue, expense, payroll, capitalization) and **CloudZero** (cloud COGS, AI spend) — margin, unit economics, AI ROI, and cost levers, every figure tied to source. What made it work wasn't the tooling; it was a series of **sharp product decisions** about what a number has to prove before it earns a place on the page.

THE ARC — WHAT WAS ASKED, AND WHAT IT DIRECTED

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- 01 Reconcile first** — *"pull the margin, reconcile to source, and stop before building the app."*
Set the non-negotiable: numbers foot to the penny before any UI. The quarter tied out exactly.
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- 02 Fix the joins** — *"Corvus Ratings is Vertex Exchange... what's the \$18,450 unassigned July revenue?"*
Confirmed customer name-mappings; caught AWS-Marketplace deals booking with no customer name.
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- 03 Widen the lens** — *"add software + AI spend; I'm building a dashboard of metrics CFOs care about."*
Pivot from a margin report to a CFO dashboard; flagged and prevented the AI/software double-count.
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- 04 Make AI answer for itself** — *"show ROI on the AI spend... pull payroll as a headcount proxy."*
Reframed AI spend as leverage: % of revenue, of margin, of salaries.
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- 05 Ship, then sharpen** — *"Phase 2 ... Phase 3, dig into the watch list, as comprehensive as possible."*
Self-contained app → interactive charts + a root-cause cost investigation.
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- 06 Demand context** — *"Q2 in isolation doesn't help — add Q1."*
Quarter-over-quarter + a 6-month trend, then a rolling Q / H1 / H2 / full-year framework.
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- 07 Insist on the meaningful metric** — *"margin % not just \$ — that doesn't tell me anything."*
Made margin % the headline, including the blended margin of loss-making customers.
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- 08 Chase materiality** — *"Palmetto Pay and Apex Motors won't move margin — show me where changing spend moves it."*
Re-ranked the watch list by absolute COGS: top 12 customers = ~49% of all cloud COGS.
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- 09 Build for durability** — *"Phase 4 — both a skill and a schedule ... projections must refresh each time."*
On-demand refresh skill + monthly automation; projections recompute dynamically, never hardcoded.
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- 10 Validate from outside** — *"cross-reference the CFO maturity model — what's missing?"*
Added cloud↔AI convergence, capitalization, scenarios, and an anomaly panel.
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- 11 Ground it in the books** — *"the capitalization tile is just modeling — pull what we actually have booked."*
Replaced a guess with real GL data and surfaced a live ASC 350-40 opportunity.

HOW IT WAS STEERED — THE THROUGH-LINES

■ Reconcile before you build

Every metric tied to source before it hit a chart.
Trust was earned by the numbers footing, not by the visuals.

■ Materiality over noise

"Show me where changing spend moves margin."
Small spikes out; the accounts that carry ~49% of cloud COGS in.

■ Ground models in the books

Modeled assumptions were replaced with actual GL and cost data wherever it existed.

■ Demand the metric that means something

\$ → margin %, adoption → ROI. A figure had to carry a decision, or it didn't make the page.

■ Context over snapshots

One quarter alone "doesn't help." Everything got a comparison and a trend.

■ Build for durability

A refresh skill, a schedule, dynamic projections, and a portable starter kit — not a one-off.

THE HEADLINE FINDINGS

Gross margin is expanding

64.8% → 65.4%

Expanding

Revenue +4.7% outpaced cloud
COGS +2.9% QoQ

AI spend growth

+33% QoQ

Accelerating

~\$1.0M run-rate · only 34% on
premium Opus

The COGS lever

~\$1.1M

Concentrated

Top 12 accounts = ~49% of cloud
COGS; compute is ~58%

Capitalization opportunity

\$268K

Opportunity

capitalized in Q1 — but AI dev
expensed ("NonAI"); \$38K floor

Where it landed: a private, self-contained, interactive dashboard — reconciled Q1 (Feb–Apr) + Q2 (May–Jul) margin — company and per-customer, software & AI spend, AI ROI, payroll



leverage, cloud↔AI convergence, data-grounded capitalization, and a root-caused margin watch list — refreshed on demand or monthly, and packaged as a starter kit anyone can reuse.

CloudZero · H1 FY2026 · figures reconciled to Campfire & CloudZero, data as of 2026-07-21. Figures shown match the illustrative sample dashboard — fictional customer names and values. Internal — private.