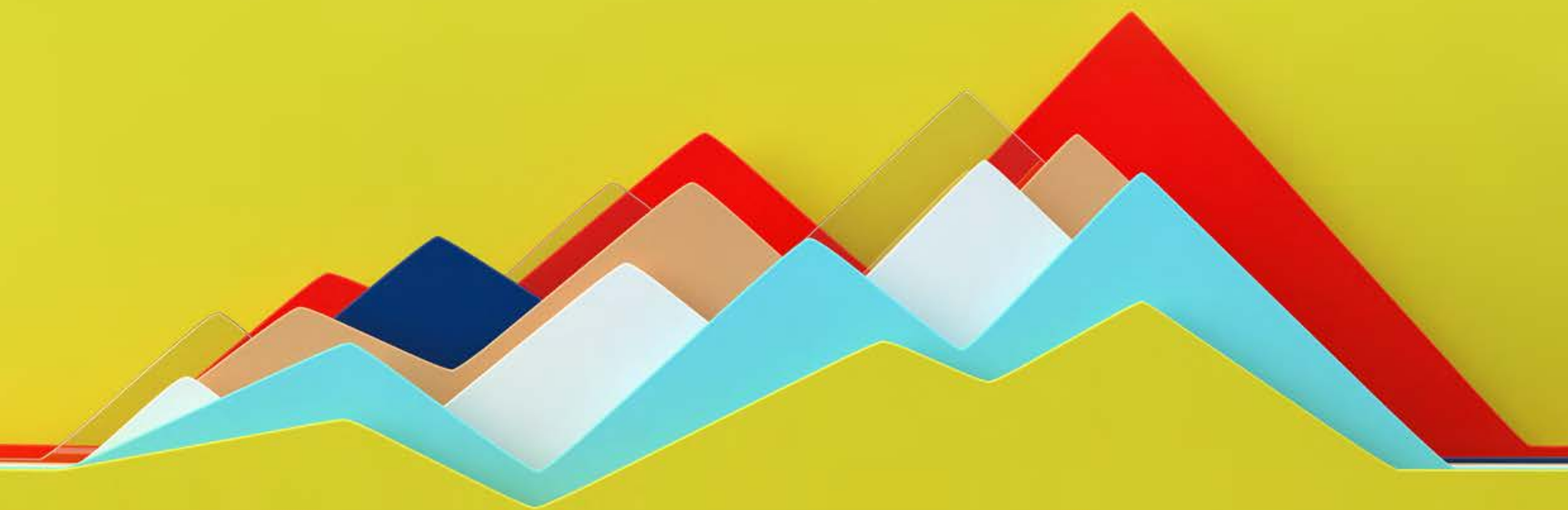
The Financial Technologist

ISSUE 2 ·· 2025

HARRINGTON STARR
Your Success. Our Business

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

Celebrating the trailblazers of financial technology



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TOBY BABB, CEO, HARRINGTON STARR

Welcome to what I truly believe to be the best issue of The Financial Technologist that we have ever published.

Over recent months, I have had the great honour of speaking to many of the finalists in this year's awards. Each year, I find it a mixture of energising and inspiring in equal measure. We get to talk to passionate people talking about their investment in their people and how they go about creating places to work that can truly be ranked towards the Top 1% of their industry.

Later in this issue, you will see an advertisement for our 2025/26 candidate and salary survey. Over recent years, we have been able to build a dataset of sentiment about how people are viewing their workplaces in the financial technology space. Overwhelmingly in this year's survey, we saw by far the most people who were unhappy in their current role and a staggering 89% of people who were considering moving in the next 12 months. That is mind-blowing. Imagine, if you dare, nine in ten of your technologists leaving in the next twelve months and needing to be replaced. I strongly believe that we are on the crest of another great resignation.

Creating time to attract, engage and retain talent is, therefore, increasingly important. Building a workplace where people thrive, want to come to work and want to stay needs real architecture, more so now than ever before. In this magazine, you will hear from many of the shortlisted companies who candidly share what they have done to build inspiring environments that become magnets for talent and produce incredible levels of productivity and performance.

Interestingly, each year we have been doing these awards, we see maturing trends in what people are doing to stand out.

I love asking the question, "why would someone work for your business over the competition?" Over the last 25 years, I have heard an assortment of answers to this question. Most are well-meaning but fail to really articulate a compelling employee value proposition. I always think a USP is hard. How achievable is unique?

To me, what makes a company stand out is, as David Harris from Baringa once told me, not a silver bullet but a thousand silver pellets. The companies that truly stand out don't have a gimmick; they have thought-out, compelling ways to build loyalty and engagement.

What has been a common theme this year?

Overwhelmingly, in the best interviews that I undertook with all the nominated companies, the most common theme this year (more so than any other year to date) was the focus on challenging work with interesting tech. It felt like 2025's crop was laser-focused on inspiring, challenging and really showcasing the interesting problems that their business was solving.

"I love asking the question, "why would someone work for your business over the competition?""

In previous years, the focus had been more culturally orientated. Perhaps more focused on gimmicks and work-life balance. This year was a much more challenging orientation, and, having worked for many years with technologists, I can see why this is such an important issue today. We have never seen such a pace of innovation or a more exciting time in terms of tech progression. I speak to people every day, brimming with ideas and thoughts about innovation. AI has totally shifted the way in which people look at their day jobs. They want input. They want to test, try, fail, improve and innovate. The companies that want to make themselves a great workplace understand that and adopt their proposition, along with their job descriptions, to ensure great, purposeful work is being done.

Pay barely came up. Neither did incentives. Flexibility played less of a part than in previous years. This was undoubtedly the year where playing with cool technology with great teammates and inspiring leadership was never more at the fore.

I am excited to see how this evolves. As AI continues at pace, how are people upskilling their teams? Are mundane tasks being automated or farmed out to agents to allow people to really focus on the deep work or relationship-building aspects of their role?

I am excited to see this shift. It always feels slightly different each year, but I love the fact that people are really thinking, adapting and listening to their people. With outstanding two-way communication channels and clarity of expectation, great work can be done.

It has always been hard to judge these categories,

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TOBY BABB, CEO, HARRINGTON STARR

and I want to thank our outstanding crop of judges who have given their time to watch all of the videos we filmed of the applicants. We ask them who they would most want to work for in each category. I haven't envied them trying to differentiate this year. It is the most people we have ever interviewed, the most applications we have ever received, and probably the hardest to differentiate who was the best. The competition was super high.

I hope when you read this, you think about your organisation. What can we do better to really stand out as an employer? If you are an employee, how can you help your company stand out? What feedback can you give?

"I love talking to people about how they recruit and where their challenges are. I love helping to solve those challenges. Everyone can be a great employer."

I absolutely love thinking about workplace culture. I love talking to people about how they recruit and where their challenges are. I love helping to solve those challenges. Everyone can be a great employer. Everyone should strive to become one. If you are not thinking about your talent strategy for 2026, I urge you to do so and have a read of this magazine first. There are some great articles by some great businesses to help guide you on the way.

A talent exodus is coming. Some companies will win and be able to bring in extraordinary talent and engage and retain their best people. Some, worryingly, will be decimated and must start again. Which one you are is a choice.

I'm always happy to talk about this subject. Please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Enjoy the read.

Toby

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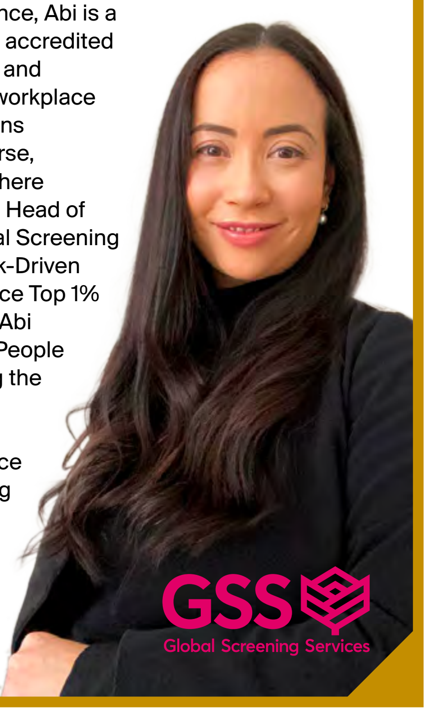
THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

Meet the Judges

ABI HUNTER

Head of People & Culture, GSS

With over 10 years of progressive People & Culture experience, Abi is a certified HR professional, accredited Mental Health First Aider, and passionate advocate for workplace community. She champions wellbeing and builds diverse, inclusive environments where everyone feels valued. As Head of People & Culture at Global Screening Services (GSS), a Network-Driven Managed Service and twice Top 1% Workplace award winner, Abi defines and implements People Strategy while overseeing the employee lifecycle. From talent acquisition and onboarding to performance management and learning & development, she cultivates a People-First culture that empowers every team member to thrive and deliver impact.



Jude Davis

Founder, The BOP

Jude Davis is a marketing and brand consultant with experience across start-ups, not-for-profits and corporates, including 12 years at Apple. He now leads The BOP, a growing platform supporting Black professionals through insight, access and community. He also writes Hey Jude, a newsletter offering honest advice on navigating the workplace as a Black or mixed heritage professional, and reflections for allies looking to listen, learn and support more meaningfully.

Adrian Ip

Chief Strategy Officer, Aquis Exchange

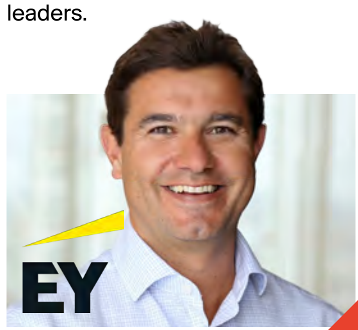
Adrian is the Chief Strategy Officer at Aquis. He joined in 2017 and is the Principal for the Aquis Technologies business, while also leading the group Product Management, Project Management and Quality Assurance departments ensuring that Aquis' own markets as well as those of our clients have best in class exchange technology regardless of asset class, trading mechanism or liquidity profile.

Adrian's history in financial services includes senior roles in market data, listed derivatives, equities and FX spot across a number of organisations including Thomson Reuters, HSBC, Actant and others.

David Williams

UK Banking & Capital Markets Consulting Leader, EY LLP

David is a Partner in EY's Financial Services Consulting practice, responsible for the growth of the Banking & Capital Markets business. He joined EY in 2005, and previously held roles in strategy, technology and operations at energy trading and investment banking organisations. During his time at EY he has also led the EMEIA graduate programme as well as creating the Devi Programme, EY's development programme for aspiring female technology leaders.



LOUISA MURRAY

Railsr/ Equals

Louisa is Chief Sales Officer at Railsr, a leading embedded finance platform. As a senior commercial leader and financial markets expert, her career spans global banking, FinTech, and entrepreneurial ventures. She began as a derivatives trader and director at a top UK bank before helping launch and grow startups across sectors. At Railsr, she drives global sales, customer acquisition, revenue growth, and partnerships. Known for profit-focused yet collaborative leadership, she is also a trusted FinTech voice, board member, and advocate for diversity and responsible innovation.

railsr

Toby Babb

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Harrington Starr

Toby has worked in FinTech recruitment for a quarter of a century. Alongside this, he hosts the FinTech Focus TV podcast, regularly speaks at industry events worldwide and moderates panels in financial technology. Toby is a multi-award-winning recruitment leader and a well-known FinTech figure.

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Lili Singh

People Business Partner, Calastone Limited

Lili is a seasoned people partner, most recently working with both venture capital and private equity backed businesses. She is currently business partner at Calastone Limited, a global leader in financial technology where she is pivotal in managing the complete employee lifecycle, from recruitment and onboarding to performance management, growth and development, and training. Her deep understanding of the intricacies of human resources, combined with a passion for fostering a positive employee experience, makes her uniquely placed to create an inclusive and thriving work environment.

CALASTONE

Meet the Judges

The Top 1% Workplace Awards 2025

ROGER BINKS

Chief Commercial Officer, Kani

Currently CCO of Kani Payments Limited, Roger previously spent seven years at Intu Properties PLC as Customer Experience Director, driving the intu brand and a customer-centric culture. Before joining Intu, Roger was VP of Global Marketing (CMO) at Regus Group Plc (now IWG) for five years, covering CRM, Digital, Field Marketing, PR & Comms, Brand Development, Channel Management, and Customer Insight across 100 countries. Prior to Regus, he worked at Marriott International leading UK customer engagement programs, including Marriott Rewards. He also spent eight years at Dixons Stores Group in Marketing, Operations, and Sales roles.

Wendy Chan

Director, North America
The Realization Group

Wendy is Director of North America at The Realization Group, driving growth initiatives, partnerships, and client engagement across financial and broader sectors. Previously Global Head of Marketing at Vela Trading Systems, she also held senior roles at SunGard, XSP, and Interactive Data. She is a Women's Bond Club member.

NEETU KUMAR

Senior Talent Acquisition Partner, Centrica

Neetu Kumar is a Senior TA Partner and people leader who's passionate about making hiring smarter and more inclusive. She blends tech-savvy thinking with a people-first mindset to create fair, engaging recruitment experiences. Neetu's all about building diverse teams, supporting DEI in real ways, and helping others grow. With a warm, collaborative style, she brings energy and empathy to everything she does!

centrica

Eric Soderberg

Managing Partner, Forefront Communications

Eric brings 25 years of FinTech and Financial Services marketing and communications experience to Forefront Communications, where he is Co-Founder and Managing Partner. Forefront is the go-to partner for FinTech and Capital Markets firms, scaling to meet unique client needs. He previously served as CMO at Macgregor, ClariFI, NYFIX, Trepp, BondDesk Group and Convergex.

Nadia Edwards-Dashti

Co-Founder and Chief Customer Officer, Harrington Starr

With 19 years of experience in recruiting within the financial services technology sector, Nadia has been responsible for helping companies thrive, and helping people grow their careers while championing inclusion in the sector. As Chief Customer Officer, she hosts 'FinTech's DEI Discussions' podcast, sharing stories of equitable change in the industry. Nadia authored 'FinTech Women Walk the Talk', featuring 100+ podcast interviewees. Her gender equality campaigns include the award-winning 'Talent Equity List'. A recipient of numerous accolades, she's an Industrial Fellow at the University of East London and a Forbes.com contributor.

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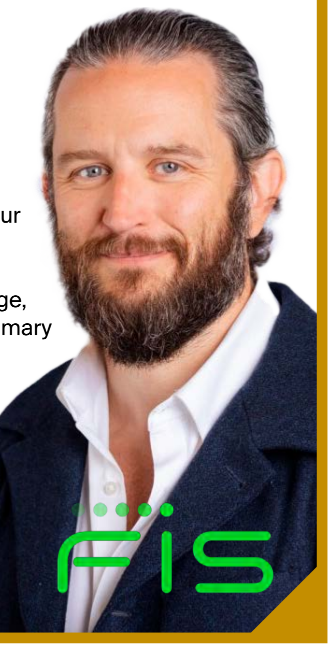
Kevin Flood

Head of European Growth Office, FIS

Kevin Flood, Head of European Growth Office, has extensive experience in banking and capital markets, both as a bank employee and a consultant at one of the big four firms. Recognized as a strategic transformation leader, Kevin has a proven track record of delivering large, complex changes globally, with a primary focus on the payments industry. Currently, Kevin is responsible for overseeing the European landscape for Banking & Payments solutions, bringing together connected and forward-looking solutions for a diverse client base, and achieving better outcomes for clients.



JOVI OVERO

Chief Executive Officer

Jovi Overo is a FinTech executive with a track record of building and scaling regulated infrastructure across banking, payments, and digital assets. With 2 decades of leadership experience spanning Europe, the Middle East, and frontier markets, he specialises in go-to-market execution, regulatory navigation, and product-commercial fit. Jovi has led global teams across crypto-native and traditional finance environments, advising founders and boards on how to close the gap between innovation and compliance in a post-crypto, programmable finance era.

LEARNING FROM SUCCESS.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

NADIA EDWARDS-DASHTI
CHIEF CUSTOMER OFFICER, HARRINGTON STARR

"This year's awards go beyond winners– **they share lessons every organisation can learn from."**

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The Best Workplace for Trading Professionals

Long-term career growth
World-class talent attraction
Precision hiring & excellence
Trading–tech collaboration
Entrepreneurial, agile culture
Global mobility & opportunity
Autonomy & accountability

The Best Workplace for Sports Trading Professionals

Staff-first culture
Listening and acting on feedback
Accessible leadership
Safe growth environments
Genuine talent investment
Collaboration-driven culture
Inclusive innovation

The Top 1% Leader of the Year

Inclusivity beyond hiring
Empathetic leadership
People-first transformation
Purposeful innovation
Global, humble,
impact-driven culture

The Best Workplace for Technologists

Built-in collaboration
Developer autonomy
Cutting-edge tech
Innovation without red tape
Growth and recognition
Top-down innovation culture
Visible impact

The Best Workplace for Data and AI Professionals

Data-driven impact
AI in culture and product
High-trust, autonomous workplaces
Fast upskilling and career growth
Flexibility and wellbeing
Mission-driven innovation

The Best Workplace for Talent Investment

Personalised development
Leadership pipelines
Values-based recognition
Employee storytelling
Culture-driven retention
Support beyond skills

The Best Cyber Team Award

Diverse, high-performing teams
Inclusive recruitment
Awareness and cyber education
Cross-sector collaboration
Staff networks and communities
Career growth opportunities
Transparent, shared cyber ownership

The Best Employee On-Boarding Experience

Pre-day-one onboarding
Buddy systems & founder access
Hands-on from the start
Cohort-based belonging
Structured yet flexible learning
Continuous feedback & growth
Culture-led onboarding

The Best Sales Professionals

Sales as a mindset
Entrepreneurship & autonomy
Stability with agility
Structured development
Recognition & reward
Collaboration over competition

The Best Workplace for Digital Assets

Transforming market infrastructure
Psychological safety culture
Unique regulatory edge
Entrepreneurial growth
Institutional-grade systems
Vision-led talent attraction
Global expansion

The Best Workplace for Product Innovation

Bold market pivots
Global-first innovation
Customer problem-solving at scale
Collaboration-driven culture
AI-first, experiment-led
Unified payments experience
Structured experimentation

The Best Emerging FinTech Workplace

Customer-first innovation
Deep tech impact
Learning and growth
Respectful challenge & collaboration
Global diversity, remote-first
Mission-driven resilience
Flexibility & empowerment

The Best Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative

Partnerships with DEI organisations
Accessibility at the core
Mandatory DEI learning
Peer recognition of values
Flexible work innovation
Values in hiring & culture
Employee-led culture co-creation

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Champion

Psychological safety for all voices
Data-driven, accountable leadership
Diversity of thought, not just representation
Flexibility & life-stage support
Sponsorship, mentoring & coaching
Inclusion in daily culture
Leadership modelling & shared responsibility

The Best Internal Talent Team

Human-first candidate care
Respectful, inclusive hiring
Responsible use of AI
Internal mobility & career growth
Mission-driven culture
Trust & empowerment from day one

Team Excellence

Transparent, feedback-led culture
Empowered, autonomous teams
Inclusive, global approaches
Cross-functional collaboration
No-ego, no-blame mindset
Career development frameworks
Celebration & recognition

The Best Workplace Culture

Trust & autonomy at scale
Psychological safety fuels innovation
Culture as lived practice
"No brilliant assholes" policy
Mission-driven success
Resilience in tough times
Peer-led networks & recognition

THE WINNERS

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

2025'S TOP 1% WORKPLACES

All Options
aiviq
Atom bank
Banqora
BCB GROUP
BNP PARIBAS
CoBa
Alpaca

ANDOR HOLDING GROUP
ANDOR CARDS Automate · Communicate · Orchestrate
amelco TECHNOLOGY IN PLAY
aquis a SIX company
ARCHAX
AutoRek
Baringa
bitpace

1590 BERENBERG
BMLL
CAPLIN
Corlytics
Checkout.com
delta FINANCIAL SYSTEMS
DEUTSCHE BÖRSE GROUP
ecommpay

Edenred Payment Solutions
Embat
EVENTUS
feedzai
FINCRIME DYNAMICS
FLAGSTONE
FLEXTRADE Trade your best.
football radar
InTick

FIS
GSS Global Screening Services
Hey FLOW.
iCapital
IMANDRA
ipushpull
LMAX Group
LMAX Digital
MILLENNIUM

Mother Board
muinmos
North One
ozone API
Partners Capital
payabl.
Primer
quantifi

Rapid Addition Electronic Trading Innovators
SIGMA
SILVERTIDE MARIANA UFP
SIX
SPORTINGSOLUTIONS
SteelEye
Stable
STERLING TRADING TECH

Swift
TASKIZE
TNS
TOKENOVATE
TRADEROOT INTERNATIONAL
TransFICC
unbiased
upvest

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST WORKPLACE FOR TECHNOLOGISTS

WINNER

FLAGSTONE

The judges recognised Flagstone as an outstanding workplace for technologists, combining scale with a culture of trust, fairness, and resilience. Their security and resilience by design set a strong foundation, while innovative practices such as pair programming and transparent career pathways support continuous learning and collaboration. A novel bursary programme encourages professional development, alongside clear opportunities for internal mobility. With competitive benefits and a culture that prioritises openness and growth, Flagstone exemplify what it means to create a workplace where technologists thrive.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

TransFICC

TransFICC were recognised for their culture of communication and collaboration, with frequent stand-ups, knowledge sharing, and pair programming at the core of their approach. The judges highlighted their lean middle-management structure and emphasis on coaching, supported by a strong ratio of senior developers. These practices create an environment where technologists are empowered to learn, contribute, and grow together.

MILLENNIUM

The judges commended Millennium Advisors for providing technologists with the opportunity to work on bleeding-edge projects in an environment that reduces red tape and maximises autonomy. Their emphasis on career development, people, and culture, alongside a strong trajectory, reflects a workplace where entrepreneurship and accountability are encouraged. Evidence of internal promotions and mobility further strengthens their position as a top workplace for technologists.

InTick

InTick were recognised for empowering technologists to solve complex challenges with autonomy and purpose. Engineers are trusted to experiment and share ideas openly, supported by an inclusive culture that values usability, high standards, and continuous learning. It's a workplace where curiosity is encouraged and people are inspired to deliver meaningful, lasting impact.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST EMERGING FINTECH WORKPLACE

WINNER

North One

The judges recognised NorthOne as an outstanding example of an emerging FinTech that is reshaping digital banking for small businesses. Their innovative approach to products demonstrates real customer impact, while their remote-first culture prioritises transparency, trust, and empowerment. Employees are enabled to make an impact from day one, supported by a strong mission-driven ethos. The judges agreed that NorthOne's combination of customer focus and cultural strength made them the clear category winner.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Embat

The judges praised Embat for fostering a culture defined by ambition, humility, and continuous growth. They noted the company's strong sense of shared mission, empowering employees with genuine ownership and a flexible view of success. Every team member is offered not just a job but an ambition, supported by investment in their future. This combination of purpose and people focus marked Embat as a workplace where innovation and talent can thrive.

Stable

The judges identified Stable Payments as a true "one to watch" in emerging FinTech. At an early stage of their journey, the company has already demonstrated strong ethics, a clear vision, and bold leadership. With an authentic and direct approach, Stable Payments is breaking new ground in serving underserved markets. The panel saw enormous potential in their trajectory and look forward to seeing how the business develops over the next year.

FINCRIME DYNAMICS

Fincrime Dynamics was recognised for its bold and innovative approach to fighting financial crime. The judges highlighted their use of synthetic data solutions and a bold, action-oriented culture that empowers employees to take initiative, which fosters honesty, autonomy, and shared accountability. By combining technical expertise with a culture of open debate and inclusion, the company is creating an environment where diverse voices are heard, and employees are encouraged to bring their full selves to work. This commitment to innovation and empowerment impressed the panel.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST WORKPLACE CULTURE

WINNER

FLAGSTONE

Flagstone sets the benchmark for workplace culture, blending transparency, collaboration, and purpose into every aspect of its organisation. Employees described a culture where feedback is actively sought, leaders are approachable, and decisions are made with inclusion at the core. Flagstone invests heavily in internal growth and progression, while also creating a supportive and energised environment that people genuinely want to be part of. This is not culture as a poster on the wall; it's culture in action, where respect and opportunity drive both performance and belonging.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Primer

Primer has designed a culture around trust and autonomy, proving that a globally distributed company can still feel unified and connected. With employees across 30+ countries, Primer invests in intentional moments of togetherness, from team "workations" to the annual company retreat, ensuring collaboration goes beyond the screen. Flexibility is built into everything, from unlimited leave to uncapped commissions, supported by grassroots initiatives like peer-to-peer recognition and women's circles. This is a culture where belonging is fostered daily, and where people have the freedom to grow on their own terms.

Banqora

Banqora is building a culture of ownership and connection, even in a fast-scaling environment. With strong values rooted in curiosity, trust, and collaboration, employees are encouraged to challenge, innovate, and take responsibility for outcomes. Remote and distributed by design, Banqora ensures its teams stay aligned through open communication, transparency from leadership, and intentional moments of connection. The result is a workplace where people feel empowered to do their best work while contributing to a bold mission.

STERLING TRADING TECH

Sterling Trading Tech has reshaped its culture under new leadership, placing respect, openness, and collaboration at the heart of the business. Transparency is championed through all-company town halls, where every voice is heard and ideas spark across teams. Recognition is embedded in daily life, and new hires are empowered to make meaningful contributions from day one. By combining a winning spirit with humility, and balancing hard work with community engagement and charity, Sterling has created a culture that is both high-performing and deeply human.

ozone API

Ozone API has built a culture anchored in purpose and inclusivity. The company empowers employees to shape its direction, valuing authenticity and celebrating diversity at every level. With a clear mission to drive change in financial services, Ozone ensures that people not only contribute to industry transformation but also thrive personally and professionally within the business. This balance of ambition and care has created a culture that feels both progressive and genuinely supportive.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST WORKPLACE FOR TRADING PROFESSIONALS

WINNER

All Options

The judges recognised All Options as an outstanding workplace for trading professionals, with clear evidence of building long-term careers and attracting world-class talent. Proven pathways for progression and excellent retention demonstrate real investment in people, particularly in such a competitive space. The panel highlighted the firm's precision in hiring, its high standards for entry, and its commitment to defining what excellence looks like in the industry. With a passionate team engaged in challenging and rewarding work, All Options embodies all the ingredients of a truly exceptional workplace.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

MILLENNIUM

Millennium Advisors is highly commended for creating an environment where trading and technology excellence thrive side by side. Their entrepreneurial spirit, combined with deep technical sophistication, allows traders to work closely with developers, shaping innovation in real time. With clear pathways for growth, long tenures, and cross-functional mobility, from technologists moving into trading to traders relocating across global offices, the firm empowers people to build meaningful, lasting careers. Millennium's culture of autonomy, accountability, and collaboration makes it a standout workplace for trading professionals who want to make real impact.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

TEAM EXCELLENCE

WINNER

MILLENNIUM

The judges recognised Millennium Advisors for their strong and passionate team culture, successfully navigating significant technical and operational change with minimal staff turnover. Managing transformation at this scale is challenging for any firm, yet Millennium kept people motivated and appreciated throughout. Their culture celebrates success, sets clear pillars for excellence, and encourages individuals to achieve their best in a positive environment. As their entry noted, this is an organisation for people who want to make a difference, and one that gives back to employees as much as it asks of them.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Rapid Addition
Electronic Trading Innovators

The judges commended Rapid Addition for their impressive growth, powered by a culture of trust and transparency. Their no-ego approach ensures collaboration, momentum, and passion, enabling them to scale effectively while maintaining accountability and shared purpose.

SteelEye

SteelEye were recognised for putting team excellence at the centre of their culture, inspired by high-performance environments like Formula 1. The judges highlighted their no-blame ethos, focus on incremental improvement, and resilience in achieving cashflow positivity.

upvest

Upvest earned commendation for their people-first culture, which supports a bold mission in investment services. The judges praised their fast feedback loops, strong hiring practices, and innovative management rotations that help employees thrive in a fast-growing environment.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST SALES PROFESSIONALS

WINNER

SteelEye

The judges recognised SteelEye for delivering a clear sense of momentum and creating a culture where sales professionals thrive. The CEO and team demonstrated energy, conviction, and pride, reflecting a workplace that celebrates collaboration while rewarding individual achievement fairly. Commercial performance is outstanding, with significantly exceeding sales targets this year and major new wins across regions. The judges highlighted how SteelEye combine passion, performance, and growth in a way that stood apart from the field.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

aquis
a SIX company

The judges commended Aquis for a structured approach that develops well-rounded sales skills from day one. New hires rotate across the business, gaining product knowledge and regional responsibility within their first year. Transparent career pathways, continuous learning, and open leadership communication create confidence in the future, producing capable and ambitious professionals.

TNS

The judges praised TNS for fostering ownership among sales professionals, who are encouraged to run their portfolios like their own businesses with strong support behind them. This autonomy is balanced by collaboration, with knowledge shared openly. Significant growth and a recent acquisition point to further opportunity, though the entry was less distinctive on innovation within sales compared with others.

Edenred Payment Solutions

EdenRed were recognised for combining corporate reach with entrepreneurial spirit. The judges highlighted their gender balance goals, international collaboration, and flexible working model. Their track record of innovation, including first-to-market launches in payments, reflects ambition and creativity. While not carrying the same commercial weight as the top two, EdenRed showed genuine commitment to inclusion and progress.

DEUTSCHE BÖRSE GROUP

Deutsche Börse were recognised for leveraging their scale and diversity to support sales excellence. The judges noted the representation of women in sales leadership roles, a rarity in financial services. Collaboration across global markets and visibility at conferences and publications provide rising talent with early opportunities. While impressive in scope, the entry focused more on organisational standing than specific sales practices.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST WORKPLACE FOR DATA AND AI PROFESSIONALS

WINNER

AutoRek

The judges recognised AutoRek for its remarkable pace of progress and the culture that underpins it. In just under a year, the company moved from having no AI capability to launching its first AI service, training most of its engineers along the way. Employees are empowered to experiment, lead, and grow quickly, creating a tangible buzz of innovation. The judges also highlighted peer-to-peer recognition, a strong focus on diversity and women in tech, and a culture of openness to feedback as proof that AutoRek has built an environment where people can truly thrive.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Atom bank

The judges commended Atom Bank for redefining modern workplace culture. Its pioneering four-day week is based on the principle that well-rested, happy employees deliver their best work. Atom has also built one of the most diverse AI teams in the industry, with a notably diverse team with strong female representation, and provides broad opportunities for growth through hackfests, cross-team projects, and internal mobility. The panel agreed that Atom Bank's flexible, inclusive culture sets an impressive benchmark.

feedzai

Feedzai earned recognition for combining global scale with a strong sense of purpose. The judges praised the company's commitment to protecting consumers and processing payments on a global scale each year while ensuring its people are fully supported. From wellbeing days and seasonal flexibility to long-term career development and international diversity, Feedzai has created a workplace where employees feel valued and part of a mission with real global impact.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST WORKPLACE FOR TALENT INVESTMENT

WINNER

Checkout.com

The judges recognised Checkout.com for turning talent investment into a lived reality, not just a promise. Their thoughtfully designed early careers programme places interns and graduates in meaningful roles and supports them with coaching, community, and growth plans. Their progress on gender balance in early careers shows inclusion is not just a target but an achievement. A flagship employee storytelling initiative has created cultural momentum and strengthened engagement across the business. Checkout.com exemplify a workplace where people grow, are heard, and thrive.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

CAPLIN

The judges commended Caplin for their strong commitment to talent investment through personal development plans for every employee, robust mentoring and leadership programmes, and impactful graduate rotations. Their significant progress on female representation demonstrates real progress in diversity, while high retention and the return of former employees reflect a culture of curiosity and lasting career growth.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST INTERNAL TALENT TEAM

WINNER

Primer

Primer's Talent Team delivers impact by combining innovation with genuine care. Their integration of AI has streamlined hiring while keeping human judgment at the core, resulting in faster, fairer, and more transparent processes. By prioritising mindset over traditional credentials, they have built a diverse workforce where nontraditional hires thrive and progress quickly. The team treats candidate experience like a product, clear, respectful, and consistent, turning even rejected applicants into brand advocates. This combination of strategy, empathy, and global scalability sets a new benchmark for talent excellence.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

North One

North One's Talent Team showcases people-first hiring and career growth. Every application is reviewed by a person, with recruiters proactively guiding candidates toward the right roles and communicating openly at every stage. Their commitment to inclusivity shines through in fair job descriptions, transparent processes, and respect for the emotional journey of job seekers. Internally, the team champions mobility, enabling employees to stretch into new roles and progress across the business. This culture of trust and empowerment creates a workplace where people feel valued from day one.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST EMPLOYEE ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE

WINNER

feedzai

Feedzai stood out to the judges for their thoughtful, cohort-based onboarding approach, designed to foster belonging and community from day one. Their programme includes tailored onboarding plans, a dedicated technical enablement team, new joiners delivering a pitch of Feedzai, regular immersive bootcamps, and continuous feedback. Beyond onboarding, Feedzai impressed with their focus on work-life balance and wellbeing. Their people-centric approach ensures culture and technology work in harmony, making them a standout example of onboarding excellence.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

ipushpull

The judges commended ipushpull for their employee-first onboarding, designed for a hybrid and remote culture. A buddy system, drip-fed materials, and internal team profiles help new joiners feel supported without being overwhelmed. Wins are celebrated openly, reinforcing a strong sense of collective success.

ozone API

Ozone were recognised for their structured yet personal approach, combining onboarding bootcamps, a buddy programme, and time with founders. Their structured onboarding framework and branded welcome materials ensure clarity and belonging from the start.

FLEXTRADE
Trade your best.®

The judges highlighted Flextrade's welcoming onboarding, supported by kits, personalised messages from leadership, and team leader mentoring. Hands-on learning is complemented by digital resources, classroom training, and lunch-and-learns, creating a well-rounded experience.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVE

WINNER

ecommpay

The judges recognised ECOMMPAY for excelling in the D&I space through meaningful partnerships that support colleagues and amplify inclusion across broader communities. By focusing on a wide range of diversity metrics and groups, they ensure everyone has the opportunity to thrive. Their flagship initiative encourages people to live the company's values, creating space to celebrate, learn, and embrace differences. With low attrition and high engagement scores, the judges highlighted how people join for the role but stay for the culture. ECOMMPAY's commitment to authentic, impactful inclusion is setting a high standard for the industry.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Stable

The judges commended Stable Payments for pioneering term-time employment to lift barriers for working parents, particularly mothers balancing caregiving and maternity leave. Their authentic values foster a culture where everyone feels they belong, with flexibility and inclusion embedded from the start. The judges praised their courage in breaking norms and building a people-centric organisation from the ground up, proving that inclusive, flexible work cultures are not only possible but powerful.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION CHAMPION

WINNER

BNP PARIBAS

Ama Ocansey

CDIR, UK HEAD OF DIVERSITY & INCLUSION, BNP PARIBAS

Ama Ocansey exemplifies what it means to be a DEI Champion. She has transformed inclusion at BNP Paribas from aspiration into measurable, structural change. Ama has embedded data-led decision-making into the firm's approach, holding leaders accountable by linking inclusion objectives directly to appraisals. Her flagship programme goes beyond mentorship, emphasising the critical role of sponsorship in accelerating women's careers. Ama's courage, persistence, and vision have delivered sustainable impact across the organisation and wider

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Partners Capital

Becky Stark

HEAD OF TALENT ACQUISITION, PARTNERS CAPITAL

The judges commended Becky Stark for her role in reshaping how Partners Capital builds inclusive pipelines. She has shown that meaningful inclusion starts with early access and intentional action. Through structured opportunities, mentorship, and global collaboration, she ensures that diverse talent is supported and able to thrive. Becky's work demonstrates how small, purposeful steps can spark long-lasting change—both within her firm and across the industry.

FIS

Kevin Flood

HEAD OF EUROPEAN GROWTH OFFICE, FIS

Kevin Flood earned recognition for his ability to harness inclusion to tackle industry-wide challenges such as financial crime. In his global role, he advocates for collaboration and responsible data-sharing to move the sector from detection to prevention. By fostering psychological safety, safe-to-fail learning, and diversity of thought, Kevin creates the conditions where innovation can thrive. His leadership illustrates how inclusion can be practical and transformative, shaping both culture and business outcomes.

HeyFLOW. MotherBoard

Sophie Creese

CEO & CO-FOUNDER, HEYFLOW & FOUNDER, MOTHERBOARD

Sophie Creese impressed the judges with her pioneering work on reproductive health and motherhood in the workplace. Through MotherBoard, she has built a movement that elevates these issues to a business priority, offering organisations a charter for real accountability. With HeyFlow, she provides data-driven insights into how reproductive health affects attrition, promotion, and retention, reframing inclusion as a measurable business imperative. By turning lived experience into actionable solutions, Sophie has set new standards for how workplaces address reproductive health and career equity.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST WORKPLACE FOR PRODUCT INNOVATION

WINNER

ipushpull

The judges recognised iPushPull for creating a truly innovative culture where experimentation is central to both product and workplace design. Their pioneering use of bots and AI in workflows stood out as unique in the category, and the judges praised their ability to combine cutting-edge technology with a supportive, flat structure. Employees are trusted with autonomy, encouraged to try new things, and given space to turn small ideas into significant products. With a strong focus on growth mindset, academic partnerships, and continuous learning, iPushPull stood apart as a workplace where innovation is both cultural and commercial.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

AutoRek

The judges commended AutoRek for embedding innovation into their culture, where experimentation and collaboration are encouraged at every level. Teams are trusted to test new ideas, learn quickly, and share knowledge openly, helping the company expand their product suite at impressive pace, including advances in AI. By combining technical ambition with a supportive, people-first culture, AutoRek has created an environment where product innovation and talent development go hand in hand.

unbiased

Unbiased earned recognition for combining innovation with a mission-driven culture. The judges highlighted their emphasis on using technology to “give time back” to customers, bridging the financial advice gap, and helping people make sound financial decisions. Employees are empowered through mentorship, transparent leadership, and growth budgets, while their diverse, female-founded leadership team ensures multiple viewpoints shape progress. With a strong set of values, relentless about progress and owning results, Unbiased demonstrates how purpose and innovation can work hand in hand to create a vibrant workplace.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST WORKPLACE FOR DIGITAL ASSETS

WINNER

ARCHAX

The judges recognised Archax for its rare combination of deep passion and disciplined execution in the digital assets space. Their regulation-driven approach sets standards in a sector too often labelled the “Wild West,” ensuring trust and legitimacy. Despite rapid global growth, Archax has remained highly selective in hiring, fostering a culture of cohesion, collaboration, and energy. This blend of mission, structure, and people made them stand out as the leading workplace in digital assets.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

LMAX Digital

The judges commended LMAX Digital for striking a balance between entrepreneurial spirit and established credibility. A stable and trusted business, their culture retains agility and a close-knit feel, with senior leaders remaining personally connected to their teams. The judges were impressed by the sense of ownership and commitment across the business, underpinned by a “family-like” environment that values both performance and people.

TOKENOVATE

Tokenovate was recognised for its fearless embrace of innovation in blockchain and digital assets. The judges praised the company’s experienced leadership, strong technical foundations, and supportive culture that frames mistakes as learning opportunities. With an exciting mission and a bold approach to pushing boundaries, Tokenovate offers a workplace where curiosity and experimentation thrive alongside strong values and expertise.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST WORKPLACE FOR SPORTS TRADING

WINNER

football radar

The judges recognised Football Radar for creating a workplace culture built on transparency, collaboration, and shared purpose. Engagement across the company is exceptionally strong, with employees consistently showing pride in their contribution and alignment with the mission. Independent assessments reflect year-on-year progress in both culture and engagement, underpinned by open leadership and clear values. Football Radar exemplify how a modern workplace can balance ambition with belonging, making them a standout winner in this category.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

amelco

The judges recognised Amelco for fostering a culture of innovation and ownership in a high-growth environment. Their teams are encouraged to take responsibility, experiment, and drive change, building a workplace where people feel empowered to make an impact. This entrepreneurial approach is balanced with a strong sense of teamwork and support, ensuring individuals are never isolated in their challenges. Amelco's focus on giving employees freedom while providing guidance and resources makes them a deserving recognition in this category.

SPORTINGSOLUTIONS

The judges commended Sporting Solutions for cultivating a culture that blends stability with innovation. Employees enjoy long and successful careers within the business, supported by a collaborative environment that values respect, trust, and shared goals. Leadership promotes openness and inclusivity, encouraging people to voice ideas and challenge constructively. With a reputation for combining consistency with forward-thinking, Sporting Solutions have created a culture that allows their people to thrive while building a lasting legacy.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE BEST CYBER TEAM

WINNER

Baringa

The judges recognised Baringa for building a cyber team that blends technical expertise with the ability to simplify complexity. Their work translates security into clear, actionable outcomes that build trust and resilience across the organisation. What stood out most was their dual focus: tackling today's challenges while also investing in the future of cyber talent. With a culture rooted in collaboration, clarity, and forward thinking, Baringa has created a team that not only protects but also empowers, setting a high bar for cyber excellence.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

BERENBERG

The judges commended Berenberg for its rapid transformation, developing a high-performing cyber function in a short space of time. They were particularly impressed by the team's innovative initiatives, including the use of new technologies and creative ways to engage employees across the business. By elevating cybersecurity into a company-wide priority, Berenberg has moved from a supporting role to a central voice in shaping resilience and awareness. The judges praised this combination of speed, innovation, and cultural impact, which has positioned Berenberg as a standout in the category.

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE TOP 1% WORKPLACE AWARDS 2025

THE TOP 1% LEADER OF THE YEAR

WINNER

Ruth Fletcher

COO/CFO, GSS

The judges recognised Ruth Fletcher as a rare kind of leader who blends financial expertise, operational excellence, and human-centred leadership. She has helped her organisation grow while building the foundations for lasting success, all while remaining collaborative and hands-on. Ruth's influence spans across teams and functions, and she is universally respected for leading with empathy, integrity, and a balance of heart and head.

GSS Global Screening Services

HIGHLY COMMENDED

BCB GROUP

Tim Renew

DEPUTY CEO, BCB GROUP

The judges commended Tim Renew for exemplifying visionary, people-centric leadership at BCB Group. Guiding the business through a critical growth phase, he has shown authenticity, clarity, and commercial acumen. His commitment to meeting with 120 people one-to-one demonstrates dedication to internal culture, and his deep understanding of people and purpose left a truly inspiring impression.

Swift

Shriyanka Hore

MANAGING DIRECTOR, SWIFT

Shriyanka was recognised as a strong nominee for her thought leadership, transformation, and global impact. The judges praised her vision and cross-functional innovation, noting her authenticity and influence on an international scale. They felt the entry would have been even stronger with more evidence of internal impact through mentoring and staff engagement.

TRADEROOT INTERNATIONAL

Amanda Mosin

COO, TRADEROOT INTERNATIONAL

The judges commended Amanda Mosin as a mission-aligned global thinker focused on inclusion and digital transformation. Expanding the business outside of Africa, she encourages junior voices and champions internal promotions and skill growth. The judges highlighted her phrase, "Inclusivity is more than who's at the table, it's who we talk to when building products," as a powerful reflection of her values and leadership approach.

Global growth and the future of finance

Richard Baker,
Founder & CEO,
Tokenovate

Leading Through Cycles

Over the years, my co-founder Gerard and I have experienced many market cycles. As serial entrepreneurs, we've observed how markets rise, fall, and sometimes reinvent themselves. What remains lasting is not just the innovation of each phase, but learning from impactful people and culture: what you carry through each stage of your life journey helps shape your approach to what you choose to do and be.

When we founded Tokenovate in 2022, our goal was to create a company where our people genuinely enjoy their work and our partners appreciate the value and experience of collaborating with us. We strive to cultivate a culture where curiosity is rewarded, diversity is embraced, and individuals feel empowered to take ownership of their work. This is not just a philosophy; we believe it is essential and therefore a virtue. Innovation in financial markets does not happen in isolation; it occurs when individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives unite, exchange ideas, and question the status quo.

The Untapped Potential of the Next Generation

The UK produces some of the brightest talent in the world. Our universities and vocational training programmes nurture talent that is digitally fluent, ambitious, and motivated by purpose. Yet too many of these young persons remain underemployed today, missing the opportunity to contribute to the industries where their skills are most needed.

For a country with global ambitions, this is a waste we cannot afford. The UK's growth agenda depends on harnessing this energy and potential. At Tokenovate, we view young professionals as a vital force in reshaping financial markets. We don't just hire them: we give them responsibility, mentorship, and room to make mistakes and learn. In short, we help them "embrace the red" as part of their development journey.

A Legacy to Build On

The UK has long been a global leader in financial services. From the City of London's centuries-old trading heritage to the pioneering spirit of FinTech start-ups, the country combines legacy, responsible regulation, and innovation like nowhere else. We are home to a deep pool of resident knowledge, experts who have weathered crises, built world-class systems, and shaped global markets.

But legacy alone is not enough. To remain competitive, the UK must marry this rich heritage with the dynamism of new technologies and the creativity of fresh minds. Tokenisation, smart contracts and digital ledger technology are no longer abstract concepts; they are incredible tools that can make our markets safer, more efficient, and more transparent. This is where we at Tokenovate see our role: helping financial market firms to upgrade their systems and turn legacy into future-ready infrastructure that will carry us forward.

Tokenovate's Mission

Our mission is to turn contracts into code, workflows into growth, and friction into finality. Post-trade processes remain one of the most stubborn pain points in finance. They are complex, fragmented, manual, and often inefficient. Tokenovate's platform uses standardised data, tokenisation techniques and automation to make these workflows faster, safer, and more efficient.

Our journey has been one of persistence and purpose. We began with conversations about the lack of standards in automating post-trade processes. Today, we have launched a market-ready platform that addresses those challenges directly. Along the way, we have faced setbacks and hard lessons, and true to our values, we've embraced those "reds" as opportunities to improve.

Culture: Why We Are Different

Culture is the heartbeat of Tokenovate. While I could point to our technology, I'd rather point to our people.

We combine the energy of a start-up with the discipline of a regulated environment. Our team thrives because we prioritise trust, autonomy, and growth. We ensure that everyone has a voice, from engineering and product design through to commercial strategy.

Most importantly, we create a space where challenges are surfaced, not hidden. Problems are not a sign of weakness; they are fuel for progress. By being open about what's not working, we cultivate resilience and innovation. That is what makes us a true Top 1% Workplace.

Why Build Your Career With Us?

For young graduates and seasoned professionals alike, Tokenovate offers more than a job. It's an opportunity to shape the future of financial markets.

> **"Our mission is to turn contracts into code, workflows into growth, and friction into finality."**

Here, your contribution is visible and meaningful. You'll work with true leaders in digital assets, while being part of a close-knit, collaborative team. We are unashamedly cerebral in our approach, but we combine that with confidence, creativity and care.

We see careers as journeys of impact, growth, and shared purpose. If you want to learn, to share knowledge, and to confront challenges head-on, Tokenovate is a fantastic place where you can thrive professionally and personally.

Growth and Global Standing

Back to the bigger picture macro-view. If the UK is to strengthen its global position in capital markets, it must embrace three formidable forces: the energy of its young talent, the wisdom of its financial services legacy, and the transformative power of technology. Tokenovate sits at the intersection of all three.

By both building and harnessing new technology, we are creating the infrastructure for a more resilient financial system. By empowering the next generation workforce, we are investing in the UK's most valuable asset: its people. And by building on the UK's heritage, we are ensuring that Britain remains a trusted, innovative and influential player on the global stage. The future of finance is not just about technology. It's as much about people, culture, and courage.

TOKENOVATE

Keeping AI adoption on track starts with enterprise architecture

Nick Reed, Chief Strategy Officer, Bizzdesign

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a top CIO priority, but implementation is often a bottleneck. While 92% of businesses intend to grow AI investments, just 22% have a visible plan to guide them.

When AI initiatives lack strategic context, visibility of other initiatives, or governance requirements, they often miss business goals, waste resources or create security and compliance risks. In some cases, these challenges mean they hit the buffers on implementation before they even start. That's frustrating, especially when AI technologies offer so much potential to speed up decisions and improve performance.

Enterprise architecture (EA) keeps adoption on track by connecting strategy to systems and business activities, while enabling visibility into compliance requirements and delivering the transparency needed to scale AI safely.

When AI Runs Ahead of IT and Governance

In many organisations, business teams start using AI faster than internal IT departments can respond. This creates "shadow AI", where projects are launched without approval from IT or data governance teams, who are often aware these projects exist.

When there's no shared enterprise-wide visibility or oversight of AI initiatives, it creates two core problems: duplication and misalignment. Without clear visibility, multiple teams reinvent the wheel, wasting resources and delaying business value, and teams risk investing time and budget on AI projects that don't support strategic business priorities.

Having a shared perspective on AI initiatives can also address other risks that arise when you don't have sufficient enterprise context.

First, security. Fragmented AI deployments are harder to monitor and secure, leaving them open to cyber attacks or data leaks.

Secondly, bias and unfairness. Inconsistent or incomplete data across siloed projects increases the likelihood of biased or unreliable outcomes.

Compliance risks can also emerge, and meeting regulations like the EU AI Act becomes far harder without a unified governance approach. These risks are compounded by accountability gaps: with no clear ownership across multiple initiatives, responsibility for AI decisions and outcomes can easily fall through the cracks.

> "In many organisations, business teams start using AI faster than internal IT departments can respond. This creates "shadow AI", where projects are launched without approval from IT or data governance teams, who are often aware these projects exist."

The Role of Enterprise Architecture

To ensure maximum benefits from AI, you need visibility into how everything fits together – from strategy to processes, people, and technology. That's what EA enables.

It then becomes easier to align AI initiatives with business goals, design compliant solutions, rapidly scale what's working, and avoid wasting time and money on duplicate tools.

Because AI adoption often means changing workflows, rethinking roles, and sometimes reshaping entire business processes, EA gives the structure and visibility to make those changes in a coordinated way.

Who's Keeping Track of AI in Your Organisation?

Enterprise architecture gives governance its foundation by bringing together a single, fact-based view of systems, processes, and data across the business. That way, principles and standards are tied to the exact capabilities, workflows, and data sets that AI initiatives rely on. With this approach, governance can actively accelerate adoption. Leaders can spot bottlenecks early, resolve risks before they stall progress, and help connect AI objectives to the everyday execution needed to deliver results.

Bridging the Strategy to Execution Gap

Many organizations have big ambitions for AI yet only 1% of leaders consider it to be fully embedded in their workflows. Bridging that gap requires solid EA to connect AI to business goals, clear governance to manage risk and accountability, and the right tools to prioritize investments and measure results.

Bizzdesign

HARRINGTON STARR
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AI won't win the race, people will

Billions are being invested in AI across financial services. But the firms that come out ahead won't be the ones with the smartest models, they'll be the ones with the smartest hiring strategies.

AI is now embedded in almost every corner of Financial Technology. Fraud detection runs on anomaly models; trading strategies are tuned by machine learning; onboarding and customer service are shaped by natural language tools. For boards and executive teams, the question has shifted from "should we use AI?" to "how fast can we scale it?"

Yet the uncomfortable truth is this: algorithms are not the limiting factor. The real constraint is the people who design, govern and deploy them responsibly.

The FinTechs shaping the next decade will not simply be those with the best tools, but those with the right mix of engineers, data scientists and governance specialists who can make those tools safe, scalable and valuable. And right now, that mix is painfully scarce.

Competition for AI talent is fierce across every sector, including healthcare, manufacturing, retail and beyond. Big Tech offers prestige and deep pockets; start-ups promise autonomy and rapid progression. For financial technology businesses, this transforms recruitment from a support function into a strategic differentiator. Securing the right team early accelerates innovation; failing to do so leaves firms stuck in pilot projects while competitors move ahead.

What makes this harder is that the very best talent weighs more than salary. They are drawn to projects with measurable impact, modern tooling that won't hold them back, and a culture of continuous learning in a field that evolves by the month. Increasingly, they also care about ethics. Bias mitigation, explainability and data governance are no longer compliance afterthoughts; they are motivators for candidates choosing where to apply their skills. If you cannot offer those conditions, compensation alone won't secure or keep them.

Retention, in fact, is the quiet metric that decides who wins. Every month an experienced AI engineer or data scientist stays, the value compounds. Every departure resets momentum and increases risk. High-performing teams remain engaged when they are stretched, recognised and developed. In a market where technology cycles are measured in months, learning velocity is retention velocity.

Diversity is equally critical. Homogeneous teams build blind spots into the systems they create. Inclusive, diverse groups bring different perspectives that strengthen resilience and reduce bias in outcomes. In financial services, where algorithms affect lending decisions, market access and fraud detection, this is not only good practice, it is risk mitigation. Building balanced shortlists, inclusive job descriptions, and outreach to underrepresented groups are not HR niceties but competitive necessities.

James Platt, AI & Data Recruitment VP, Harrington Starr

And talent is no longer confined to the traditional hubs. London and New York remain central to the FinTech ecosystem, but the most forward-looking businesses are searching globally. They are building distributed teams with the right compliance, collaboration, and cultural frameworks to unlock talent wherever it is found. It requires effort and intentional design, but the payoff is a deeper and more resilient bench of expertise.

By 2030, AI will be a baseline expectation in every financial product and process. Regulation will tighten; competition for skills will intensify. The firms that thrive will be those that embed recruitment and retention of AI talent into their core business strategy, not as a series of one-off hires, but as an ongoing commitment to capability.

Your competitors can copy features. They can license the same models. What they cannot replicate is your people, your culture and the way your teams build. In the race to define the future of Financial Technology, talent isn't part of the strategy, it is the strategy.

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New model, new headache: Why the constant release of new AI models is a challenge for financial institutions' IT departments

David Sewell,
Chief Technology Officer,
Synechron

ChatGPT 5 was billed as a leap towards Artificial General Intelligence. Instead, it exposed a different problem: model churn.

ChatGPT 5 introduced the ability to automatically switch between models, making judgment calls on which one is best to use in a given context. A furore kicked off, as users complained about the 'dry' and 'flat' answers to common queries. Here's a Reddit post with more than 6,500 upvotes: "Short replies that are insufficient, more obnoxious AI-stylised talking, less "personality" and way less prompts allowed with plus users hitting limits in an hour... and we don't have the option to just use other models." A long list of individual models, with names such as o3 and 4.1, was replaced by a single choice – GPT5.

A week later, the company brought back limited choice, while the main model continues to pick the assignment. The affair highlighted how large language models are a constantly evolving technology, one where users have limited ability to influence the development of the underlying technology.

These headlines represented the opinions of OpenAI's massive consumer base, which now includes more than 20 million monthly paying subscribers. However, a different conversation was unfolding within the technology departments of some of the world's largest financial companies. These have been among the earliest and most dedicated adopters of the power of artificial intelligence, using the technology as a cornerstone in their efforts around overall digital transformation.

For financial firms, the release of a new model is a significant event, but not necessarily a surprise. OpenAI has partnerships with many financial organisations, giving them early access to the preview version of the latest models. BBVA sent out a press release just a few days after launch, saying it had been "testing the functionalities of the new model". Companies aren't refreshing the page on the release date – they have some understanding of the new release's arrival. Firms are typically not using the base version of models; instead, it is a mixture of customised versions of main LLMs and proprietary technology. When a new update is released, it may cause compatibility issues throughout the entire downstream architecture. Installation will not be as simple as downloading and porting to the latest version.

Another challenge is that, by relying on third-party models, even the CTO may not fully understand the full composition of their tech stack. While relying on an outside model creation is frequently necessary, a survey by the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority found that 46% of respondent firms reported having only a 'partial understanding' of the AI technologies they use, versus 34% of firms that said they have a 'complete understanding'. Respondents stated that third-party models create these gaps, as the technology had not been developed internally.

And financial firms are not in a position to act entirely independently. Regulations such as the EU AI Act impose documentation, risk management, and transparency obligations for high-risk AI (financial services use cases often fall within its scope). A comparable piece of guidance is the PRA's SS1/23, which requires model inventories, documentation sufficient for independent replication, governance, and validation – applicable to vendor models as well. Switching models has real infrastructure consequences and costs.

Here are three rules of thumb when deciding how to address the enhanced development cycles of large language models:

> **"OpenAI has partnerships with many financial organisations, giving them early access to the preview version of the latest models."**

1. Map before you move
Every new release tempts firms to switch – but without a living inventory of models, dependencies, and downstream uses, you're effectively blind. Large banks are already inherently omnivorous, utilising base GPT-style models, fine-tuned internal versions, and proprietary builds integrated into research, risk, and client-facing systems. When BBVA began testing GPT-5, it stressed how a single update could ripple through fraud detection, payments, and customer service platforms. A robust inventory enables IT teams to understand the potential impact of changes before implementing them, allowing for informed decision-making.

2. Build for explainability
Regulators don't care if GPT-5 is "smarter" than GPT-4. They want to know why you picked it, how it operates, and whether that choice can be defended later. The Bank of England's SS1/23 requires documentation "sufficient for independent replication," and the EU AI Act mandates that firms demonstrate controls for credit scoring and trading. Morgan Stanley, for example, has built evaluation frameworks to justify which model is routed into which task. This audit trail is the only way to align rapid model churn with supervisory expectations.

3. Balance the cycle
Quants and traders will always demand the newest toys; IT and compliance want stability. Unmanaged, this tension drains resources and fragments architecture. The discipline is to set a cadence – quarterly or semi-annual upgrades, tied to a transparent review process – rather than letting model vendors dictate the pace. JPMorgan's internal AI programs illustrate the scale of the challenge: 200,000 employees now interact with GenAI tools across 175 use cases. Constant mid-stream switches would paralyse those systems. A controlled upgrade cycle keeps innovation moving without turning every release into a fire drill.

Experienced IT professionals can be amazed at the pace of current developments. At the turn of the millennium, a server might have run a single instance of Windows for a decade. Today, multiple disruptive updates land within a single year. With billions being poured into model development, the task is to make each upgrade cycle more efficient than the last, turning installation from a drag on productivity into a source of resilience.

The untapped opportunity in FinTech: Serving the underserved

Sahra Abdille,
Customer Propositions
& Journeys, NatWest

FinTech has built its reputation on innovation and speed, yet despite all the talk of democratisation, large groups of people remain excluded because the industry has come to assume that certain customers offer little value. That view is not only misguided, but also harmful, because it leaves millions without access to tools that could help them build security and opportunity.

Why inclusion matters

The reality is that underserved groups already play a vital role in the UK economy. Women hold around 48 per cent of the nation's wealth. Migrants make a net positive contribution to the economy every year. Disabled people represent enormous spending power through the so-called "purple pound", estimated at more than £274 billion annually. And while Gen Z may appear financially stretched today, they are forecast to become the largest consumer group in history as they enter their prime earning years and inherit wealth.

These groups are not invisible in financial terms. They are simply overlooked in product design and communication. By continuing to exclude them, we not only deny individuals the chance to participate fully in financial life, but we also weaken society by reinforcing cycles of insecurity and lost potential.

NatWest Group

Beyond jargon and access barriers

Exclusion does not happen only because of wealth gaps. It also happens because finance is too often presented in a language people cannot understand and through systems they cannot easily access. A visually impaired customer struggling with an app that is not screen-reader friendly, or someone with limited literacy faced with complex terms and conditions, is not failing at finance. It is finance that is failing them.

Building inclusion means stripping back jargon, designing for accessibility, and creating support that feels human and empathetic. It means recognising that belonging is as important as availability.

A glimpse of what's possible: Bloom Money

In the UK, Bloom Money offers a glimpse of what inclusive FinTech can look like. Bloom builds on community savings traditions already trusted by migrant groups and turns them into digital tools that feel culturally familiar, simple, and safe. It does not treat these customers as an afterthought or a side market but starts from their lived experience. Bloom shows that when you design with people, rather than for them, you create products that foster dignity, trust, and long-term resilience.

The real opportunity

Serving underserved groups is not charity. It is about designing a financial system that works for everyone. The need is there, the people are ready, and the only question is whether FinTech will recognise the opportunity to close the gap, extend inclusion, and measure success not only in products delivered but in people reached.

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The AI agent gap: what's holding back financial services' digital future?

Jim Sadler,
CTO, AutoRek

AI agents promise to revolutionise financial operations, from reconciliation to regulatory reporting. However, most financial institutions remain stuck in experimental phases, unable to achieve fully automated processes where agents collaborate without human intervention.

The real barrier to AI agent adoption isn't technical capability or human trust; it's creating frameworks for agents to trust each other.

Agentic AI represents a fundamental shift from traditional automation. Rather than following predetermined rules, AI agents analyse situations, make independent decisions, and learn from each interaction. In financial operations, agents could identify a reconciliation discrepancy, research the root cause across multiple systems, and resolve the issue autonomously. These agents could function as digital colleagues collaborating with each other, or as specialised advisors providing guidance to other agents across institutions.

Yet complete automation remains elusive. While much attention focuses on humans trusting AI capabilities, a more fundamental challenge exists: How will an agent collaborating with another agent validate the capability, reliability and intentions of its digital counterpart?

This agent-to-agent trust gap represents the practical barrier defining the next phase of financial automation. To be effective, AI agents need explicit frameworks to work collaboratively, and the industry hasn't built them yet.

Infrastructure for the agent economy

Giving AI agents the authority to move money, adjust balances or make compliance decisions requires a level of confidence that many firms haven't yet developed. The industry is moving from an automation phase, where AI follows patterns and workflows, toward autonomy, where agents determine what should be done, and why. But this transition demands new verification mechanisms for inter-agent reliability.

> "Institutions that begin building agent collaboration infrastructure today, starting with internal use cases and expanding to partner networks, will define the next era of financial services automation."

Cross-institutional agent collaboration requires more than standalone AI systems. Financial institutions need shared standards for agent communication, data exchange protocols that work at machine speed and security frameworks designed for autonomous systems.

Success will require industry alignment. Those institutions focusing on building this infrastructure today will have significant advantages when agent-to-agent collaboration becomes mainstream.

Compliance at machine speed

Another challenge is compliance. Traditional compliance models assume human oversight at every critical decision point. But agents operate in milliseconds. This becomes more complex when agents from different institutions need to validate each other's compliance credentials in real time.

Compliance usually boils down to three things. Can you explain, trace and audit decisions?

To build sufficient trust models, a higher level of evidence in decision making for AI vs a human will likely be required.

However, unrealistic evidence burdens on AI systems could also act as a blocker to successful implementation. For agent-to-agent collaboration to succeed, regulators must adapt their frameworks for machine-speed operations while maintaining traditional compliance principles.

The path forward

The experimental phase of the agentic era will continue, focusing on back-office functions and internal reconciliations where agents show value in controlled environments.

The breakthrough will come when the industry develops standardised protocols for agent collaboration, building machine-to-machine diplomacy and trust frameworks. In short, agent competence will be achieved before trust is established.

Institutions that begin building agent collaboration infrastructure today, starting with internal use cases and expanding to partner networks, will define the next era of financial services automation. The question isn't whether AI agents can transform financial services, it's whether institutions are ready to capitalise on their potential.

AutoRek

> "The real barrier to AI agent adoption isn't technical capability or human trust; it's creating frameworks for agents to trust each other."

Tackling settlement efficiency for Europe's T+1 future

As the move to T+1 settlement in Europe in 2027 draws closer, leaving firms just hours rather than days to resolve any post-trade issues, the pressure is on for financial institutions to ensure they are well prepared. The shorter window in which to settle trades will magnify existing industry pain points, from fragmented processes to trade mismatches, leaving firms with even less room for error.

As Euroclear's data has shown, many settlement fails stem from matching issues, often hidden behind more obvious problems like missing securities. On a T+2 cycle, firms have the time to absorb and correct these issues but, under T+1, there is no buffer. This means exceptions must be identified and resolved in near real-time if trades are to settle.

This challenge is what drove Euroclear, Meritsoft, and Taskize to create EasyFocus+. Launched on Microsoft's cloud infrastructure and integrating across all Euroclear central securities depositories (CSDs), the platform unifies predictive analytics, benchmarking, and resolution within a single integrated environment.

The project began in 2022, with Euroclear exploring how AI could predict settlement fails. "*Clients confirmed this was valuable, especially as we move toward T+1, where there's only a narrow window to resolve exceptions,*" said Benedicte Degraeve, Product Manager at Euroclear. That idea evolved into a more ambitious goal, helping firms prevent trade fails and resolve exceptions seamlessly.

Meritsoft's Instruction Tracking and Exception Management (ITEM) platform provides the structured analytics and dashboards to pinpoint issues. "*People have data, or they have tech, or they have comms. But how do you tie it together?*" said Daniel Carpenter, CEO of Meritsoft. "*Euroclear has the data, Taskize has the communications, and we have the tech stack. EasyFocus+ brings those strengths together.*"

At Taskize, our role has been to make the solution actionable. Our Smart Directory already connects the right people at counterparties to resolve trade queries. With EasyFocus+, predictive insights and root-cause diagnostics feed directly into Taskize's workflows, so issues can be resolved quickly and in the same environment. Users know exactly who to engage with, and in a T+1 world, this ability to act quickly is critical.

Helen Adair, Chief Product Officer, Taskize

EasyFocus+ goes further by auto-identifying problems, allocating them to the right staff based on their function, and initiating resolution. Analytics then highlight trends, persistent bottlenecks, and even underperforming counterparties, creating a cycle of continuous improvement. Firms gain benchmarking capabilities to compare performance against peers, with that shared view supporting Euroclear's broader push for a harmonised post-trade landscape.

As Degraeve explains: "*Our aim is to minimise disruption to clients' IT roadmaps. Firms can access EasyFocus+ through a simple portal, benefiting from advanced analytics and resolution tools without major implementation work.*"

For us at Taskize, EasyFocus+ is about more than technology. It's about collaboration, between Euroclear, Meritsoft, and Taskize, and across the entire industry. By tying together data, analytics, and communication, we've built a platform designed to help institutions navigate T+1 with confidence, and to improve settlement efficiency for the long term.

TASKIZE

Beyond generative AI: the rise of neurosymbolic AI and automated reasoning

Paul Brennan, Chief Strategy Officer, Imandra

As the Chief Strategy Officer at Imandra, I've had a front-row seat to the evolution of automated reasoning technology and its impact on highly regulated industries like financial markets. We are in the midst of an AI revolution, but the conversation is often dominated by generative AI and large language models (LLMs). While these technologies are powerful, they have a critical and frequently overlooked problem: the lack of verifiable correctness. This is where Imandra comes in. We believe that the next frontier of AI is not about more data or bigger models, but about the integration of automated reasoning.

Our core mission at Imandra is to make AI systems trustworthy, auditable, and logically sound. We are at the forefront of a paradigm shift, moving towards what is known as "neurosymbolic AI". This innovative approach combines the two main schools of thought in AI: the "neuro" side, which includes neural networks and deep learning, and the "symbolic" side, which is based on automated reasoning using formal logic. The "neuro" component excels at finding patterns in vast amounts of data, but it can suffer from "hallucinations," a lack of transparency, and an inability to provide a mathematical proof of its outputs. The "symbolic" component is built on mathematical rigour and can prove the correctness of a system against given goals. By integrating these two approaches, neurosymbolic AI gives us a system that can learn and reason, providing a level of certainty and explainability crucial for mission-critical applications.

Imandra's automated reasoning platform is a tangible example of this in action. For years, we have worked with major financial institutions and government agencies to bring a new standard of rigour to their most complex systems. For example, in the financial sector, we've seen how complex documentation, static PDFs, and inefficient testing cycles have historically bogged down legacy processes for connecting to trading venues. We recognised the need for a change. Our solution digitises a venue's rules into a mathematically precise specification. This transforms static documentation into a "living, dynamic model" always consistent with the production system.

This approach offers our clients several significant benefits. It provides agility by offering a faster and simpler onboarding experience with reduced resource demands. It enhances transparency through an intuitive process with real-time progress tracking. It drives efficiency by providing instant feedback and measurable certification progress via simulators. And perhaps most importantly, it gives our clients a true competitive edge by significantly shortening their time to market, allowing them to focus on their core business rather than administrative burdens.

A key part of our vision for the future is Imandra Universe, our ecosystem for building neurosymbolic AI agents with robust logical reasoning skills. At the heart of this is our newest product, CodeLogician. The rise of AI-generated code has created a new challenge: how do we verify its correctness? Current generative AI tools are great at producing plausible-looking code, but they can't guarantee that the code is accurate and are often wrong in subtle ways.

This is where CodeLogician comes in. It acts as a "math PhD sidekick" for developers, using neurosymbolic AI to bridge the gap between human-readable code and a mathematically verifiable model. CodeLogician translates source code into a formal mathematical model and then uses our ImandraX automated reasoning engine to reason about it. This allows it to:

- **Formally verify properties**
  Prove that the code behaves as intended with mathematical precision.
- **Explore state spaces**
  Exhaustively analyse all possible states and behaviours of a model to identify edge cases.
- **Generate intelligent test cases**
  Automatically synthesise structured test suites based on a systematic analysis of the model's state-space.

CodeLogician isn't just a tool for generating code; it's a partner in ensuring correctness and security. This brings our industrial-grade reasoning technology, which has been battle-tested in national stock exchanges and mission-critical government projects, to everyday developers.

The era of AI, in which we simply "hope" for the correct answer, is ending. The path to trustworthy systems is through the seamless integration of automated reasoning and the neurosymbolic approach. Imandra is building the foundation for an AI-powered world where we can have confidence in the algorithms that govern our most critical infrastructure by providing the tools to mathematically verify and reason about code and complex systems.

> "Our core mission at Imandra is to make AI systems trustworthy, auditable, and logically sound. We are at the forefront of a paradigm shift, moving towards what is known as "neurosymbolic AI"."

IMANDRA

Positive challenge and debate in the workplace

"The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function."

— F. Scott Fitzgerald

Anyone who knows me knows I'm obsessed with the ocean. My first major in university was Marine Biology and a dream of mine was (is!) to be an aquanaut like Sylvia Earle. Screw going to space! I want to go into the deep, deep dark ocean! I was, therefore, absolutely enthralled with the disastrous implosion of the Titan Submersible. I know there are very few in this space; more people have gone to the moon than to the bottom of the ocean - and it was a tragic loss to the ingenuity of deep-sea exploration.

The thing is, it was also completely preventable.

The Titan disaster happened because the CEO refused to listen to challenges from his team about safety and necessary tests. He fired anyone who opposed his views and turned what should have been an amazing advance in ocean exploration, into a horrific event. I won't call it an accident or a failure because he operated wilfully and because he did not learn. Hopefully, his remaining crew did.

Most companies aren't dealing with potential life and death situations like OceanGate was, but having diverse opinions and healthy debates are how we learn and grow, and a diverse and open company culture is the key to success: "If everyone is thinking alike, then no one is thinking." Having a company culture that encourages, supports and recognises the need for challenge and debate is essential. People have to be able to know they can challenge the status quo. This is where true innovation lies!

Negative Nellie, David Downer, Positive Pete, and Go-Go Mary-Jo!

Diversity isn't just about culture and gender, although they obviously play a crucial role! It's also about different ways of looking at things. I might look at a red circle and think "apple", my teammate may look at the same red circle and think "stop". The way we decide to see the red circle will only come from discussion and challenge, and this comes from a culture of honest communication and exchange of ideas. A good company will have values that support its growth strategy, whatever that may look like. You're a FinTech start-up? You need to foster creativity, innovation and celebrate fast failure. You're customer-centric? Your values should reflect the importance of autonomy and trust in your employees. Regardless of what your organisation does, communication, transparency and empathy should be the pillars upon which you nourish positive challenge and debate in the workplace.

Nicole Bossieux, Chief Revenue Officer, FinCrime Dynamics

FINCRIME DYNAMICS

Netflix and Chill?

Check out these great documentaries on how NOT to run a company

Company	Cultural Issue	Impact
OceanGate	Suppressed safety concerns, authoritarian leadership	Fatal accident, operational shutdown
Theranos	Intimidation, lack of accountability	Regulatory collapse, company failure
Boeing	Profit-first culture, ignored warnings	Engineering failures, loss of trust
WeWork	Hyper-centralized control, lack of transparency	Failed IPO, leadership shake-up

Would you hire Picasso to paint your living room?

Paul Humphrey, Chief Executive Officer, BMLL

I'm sure we'd all want to say yes, knowing that this wouldn't be the best use of his time and skills. By the same token, every day, some of the industry's most experienced quants, hired at great expense, spend 80% of their valuable time scrubbing data before they can start using it. But is that the best use of their skills?

The buy versus build argument has been around for many years. When it comes to market data, firms face a conundrum: do they buy the raw data and spend 80% of their quant teams' time cleansing the data before they can use it to improve trading performance? If so, is this because firms simply don't believe they can acquire data of the quality of normalisation they require? Buying data from third-party vendors has, in the past, not met acceptable standards, so perhaps they believed that only they knew how to solve the data puzzle.

That debate is now over.
And here is why.

We have solved the data conundrum

For decades, the historical market data industry was the 'exhaust' of the wider market data industry. It received little to no investment as traditional providers prioritised revenue from the real-time world. That strategy doesn't work in a quant-driven environment. Having gaps, spikes, and flaws in your data doesn't cut it anymore. This is why we have invested heavily in our data engineering capabilities, and now the market is voting with its feet. Firms are increasingly building their strategies on BMLL data and relying on us.

'Buy to build' can, and is, taking centre stage

We are increasingly witnessing a shift across market participants towards buy-to-build strategies, cementing the fact that owning or engineering vast amounts of data is no longer what differentiates firms. It's what they do with the data that matters and gives them a competitive edge.

What stands out for us in 2025 is that sophisticated firms are now trusting our normalisation processes and are increasingly building their global strategies on our historical data.

Here are some of the game-changing collaborations that cement the buy-to-build trend. Our partners use our data to understand market and liquidity dynamics; analyse market quality; optimise trading strategies and improve performance; develop their algos and smart order routers, create custom analytics, unify historical and real-time data for improved execution, and drive market structure thought leadership across the industry.

Optiver builds its strategies on BMLL data and analytics

A strategic investor today, Optiver started as a BMLL customer, relying on BMLL's historical data to power algo development, execution analysis, shape pricing strategies and generate insights that influence their trading strategies. More recently, Optiver became both an investor and a member of the Client Product Advisory Board (CPAB), which gives them a unique opportunity to understand and shape BMLL products and product roadmap, and to build their strategies on BMLL data and analytics.

Kepler Cheuvreux built its KCx Spark Smart Order Router on BMLL data and analytics

KCx Spark was designed to intelligently access liquidity across European markets, ensuring best execution, reduced latency, and the ability to adapt to changing market conditions by effectively routing orders. BMLL's harmonised Level 3 historical European order book data powers KCx Spark, enabling the Quantitative Execution Team to easily create and back-test execution models at scale.

Broadridge builds BMLL historical data and analytics into its EMS and OMS platforms

BMLL's historical data and analytics are now available within Broadridge's global sell-side OMS and Xilix EMS for buy-side firms in Japan. Actionable insights and robust analytics are available directly within the workflows of both global sell-side and Japanese buy-side clients, at the point of execution. This empowers Broadridge clients with best-in-class tools to build their strategies and improve trading performance.

Ultumus builds ETF analytics on BMLL data

Ultumus is using BMLL's high-quality data to assess the impact of its Portfolio Composition File (PCF) service on trading efficiency. A leading European ETF issuer using Ultumus' PCF, backed by robust BMLL data and analytics, was able to analyse its spread performance, which evidenced a 16% reduction in spread threshold breaches and a 12% performance uplift. The partnership between Ultumus and BMLL will benefit the ETF market overall, leading to increased trading efficiency and robust data quality supporting future ETF launches.

Wamid will build white-labelled cloud analytics tools for Saudi markets on BMLL data

Wamid partnered with BMLL to bring advanced analytics tools to the Saudi capital markets and deliver the region's first white-labelled cloud analytics tools to quants, analysts and institutional investors. This represents a significant leap forward in market transparency, insight-led decision-making, and the development of a more sophisticated market infrastructure in Saudi Arabia.

Aquis built its Metrics Warehouse and Market at Close analytics on BMLL data

Aquis launched its Metric Warehouse to carry out large-scale analytics and provide bespoke performance metrics to its customers, which showcase market quality and optimise liquidity. Aquis chose BMLL's ready-to-use, normalised Level 3, 2 and 1 order book data for all European venues to build this analytics service. Aquis also developed its Aquis MaC analysis using BMLL data, demonstrating the benefits of Aquis' "Market at Close" service, which allows members to post orders at the same price as the primary exchanges during the close.

Pico and Exegy combine their real-time data with BMLL's historical data to help clients build their execution strategies

The strategic partnerships between Pico and BMLL Exegy and BMLL respectively address the growing need for access to real-time and historical data sets simultaneously to accelerate research, understand liquidity dynamics, and optimise trading outcomes.
The collaborations allow quants and high-performance traders to streamline their workflows as they move through their journey from research to testing and into production.

New market data standards are here to stay

We've been working tirelessly to raise the quality of historical market data across the industry, and we are proud to play our part in setting this new standard, alongside our clients and partners, who only ever demand more from their data. And rightly so. If you get normalisation only 95% correct, then you should not bother. What's more, making poor-quality data usable is very expensive. Firms that focus on the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) are better able to drive their market data fees down.

At BMLL, we obsess over the edge cases, worry about the fine detail, and we do this so that our clients don't have to. Some consider this the mundane part, but we don't! We're delighted to see the industry as a whole benefit from high-quality order book data that is easily accessible and ready to use. This means firms don't need to hire Picasso to do the menial data curation job; they can hire quants to do what they do best: build successful trading strategies.

BMLL

Confidence is a business asset – not a personality trait

Kirsteen Williamson-Guinn,
Founder, Elevate Women

Have you ever talked yourself out of a role because you didn't think you could do all of it, then kicked yourself when someone else landed the job?

Have you ever under-prepared for an interview, assuming someone else had it in the bag?

Have you ever struggled to confidently articulate your business impact?

You're not alone. These aren't random moments, they're signs that your self-concept might be misaligned with your ambition.

And when how you see yourself doesn't match the level you're aiming for, it's like driving with the handbrake on: you might get there, but it'll be bumpy, slow, and harder than it needs to be.

In FinTech and fast-paced industries, confidence isn't a "nice-to-have", it's a business asset. Confidence is not a trait. It's a skill. It's built through awareness, intention, and practice.

Why Your Self-Concept Matters

Most people over-prepare for interviews externally - CV tweaks, rehearsed answers, company research - but skip the internal work. And that's the real foundation.

Self-concept is how you see yourself: your abilities, value, and place in the professional world. When it's solid and aligned with your goals, you show up with clarity and conviction. You speak to your strengths, own your impact, and handle challenges without spiralling into self-doubt. But when it's shaky?

- **You feel less confident.**
- **You question if you're "good enough."**
- **You subtly sabotage, like assuming you won't get the job before you've even interviewed.**

This isn't about positive thinking or fluffy affirmations. It's about shifting your identity to match your ambition. Because if you don't believe you belong in that room, why should anyone else?

Confidence Is Built, Not Born

Confidence doesn't mean having it all figured out. It is about having built self-trust through action, through wins, yes, but also through failures.

Confidence is cultivated. And like any skill, it needs practice.

You don't build it by just prepping your talking points. You build it by upgrading your self-concept, especially before high-stakes moments like interviews or big career moves.

How to Strengthen Your Self-Concept Before an Interview

If you want to show up as someone who can lead, influence, or transform, you have to believe it first.

Here's how to do the inner work:

1. Reflect on What You've Already Overcome

Look back on challenges you've tackled.

- What did you get through that felt impossible?
- What qualities helped you push through?
- What patterns do you see in how you navigate obstacles?

This isn't about ego, it's about gathering evidence that you're capable and resilient.

2. Fully Receive Feedback

Stop brushing off compliments. When someone praises your work, take it in. Write it down. Re-read it.

Others often see strengths in you that you overlook. Let their feedback become part of your self-concept. We often absorb the constructive feedback easier than the positive!

3. Review Your Last 3 Years of Impact

Dig into past reviews, feedback, or project results:

- What outcomes did you help drive?
- What changed because of your involvement?

Get specific. Turn your wins into impact stories you can use in interviews, and confidence anchors you can return to anytime.

Look Ahead: Can You See Yourself in That Role?

A powerful way to build confidence is to visualise yourself succeeding in the role you're aiming for. Your brain responds to detailed, emotional visualisation like it's already happening, building familiarity and reducing fear.

- Can you see yourself thriving in the new role?
- Can you feel the excitement of solving new problems or leading a new team?
- Do your actions and mindset align with that vision?

If you can't see yourself there, it might be difficult for a hiring manager to see you there too.

Growth Mindset: Your Edge in a Tough Market

Let's be honest, the job market is tough. You might face rejection. You might get ghosted. You might apply for ten roles and hear nothing back.

That doesn't mean you're not good enough. It might mean you need to tweak your approach.

This is where a growth mindset becomes critical.

Every application, interview, or even silence is data:

- What went well?
- What could I tweak next time?
- What support might help me show up stronger?

Confidence is built in the doing, not just the thinking. And yes, ask for help. You don't have to do this alone.

Quick Confidence Audit: 5 Self-Checks

Ask yourself:

1. Can I clearly see myself in the role I'm going for?
2. Do I feel excited about where I'm heading?
3. Are my actions aligned with my goals?
4. Am I approaching the process with a growth mindset?
5. Am I letting others support me?

If you're shaky on more than one, it's time to strengthen your confidence muscle.

Take the Handbrake Off

Confidence isn't about being perfect, it's about backing yourself.

When your self-concept, strategy, and mindset are aligned, you don't drag yourself toward your next role. You move with purpose and momentum.

Want to Check Your Confidence Levels?

Take my quick Confidence Quiz to see where you're strong and where you might need a boost.

Need a sounding board for your next move? Book a free 30-minute chat to explore your growth goals here.

And for more insights and career strategies, follow me here on LinkedIn.

https://kldndktp.scoreapp.com/p/main-landing-page

https://letsmeet.io/elevatewomen/30-minute-virtual-coffee

https://www.linkedin.com/in/williamson-guinn/

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HARRINGTON STARR
Your Success. Our Business

The emerging intelligence layer: from learning tools to tools that learn

Dr Nicholas Holden,
Co-Founder and CTO,
Banqora

The stock market's AI euphoria implies huge efficiency and productivity gains. But how exactly might this come to fruition? AI is being added to almost every application with differing levels of success, but what is the end state?

Each transformative economic era has produced companies of increasingly large scales, these are companies that didn't just participate in the revolution but enabled it. The Dutch East India Company (VOC), founded in 1602 with record capital of 6.4 million guilders, pioneered the modern corporation with innovations like joint-stock ownership and limited liability, reaching 200% of its original value by 1635 and breaking centuries of economic stagnation. The Industrial Revolution, beginning around 1760 but not significantly boosting productivity until the 1840s, culminated with Standard Oil controlling 90% of U.S. oil refining by 1905 at over $1 trillion valuation in today's dollars, helping GDP per capita to more than double. The Internet Revolution compressed this timeline but created similar value, with the web launching in 1991 and companies like Microsoft and Apple becoming the first trillion-dollar winners by 2018. Internet technology is estimated to have driven two-thirds of total productivity growth between 1995-2002 with 1.5 percentage point annual gains during the late 1990s boom.

Now the AI Revolution has produced Nvidia, which reached a $4 trillion market cap in 2024, with possibly only the Dutch East India Company's tulip-fuelled peak exceeding it (by some valuations). Nvidia isn't just an AI company; it's the infrastructure provider that makes the majority of AI possible. Like Standard Oil powering industrial factories, Nvidia powers the computational engines of artificial intelligence. For Nvidia's $4 trillion valuation to be justified, AI must deliver productivity improvements that match previous revolutions but at unprecedented speed and scale. Goldman Sachs estimates AI could boost global GDP by 7% ($7 trillion) and increase productivity growth by 1.5 percentage points over a decade, McKinsey projects AI could add $2.6-4.4 trillion annually in economic value.

If we compare the timelines, Standard Oil took approximately 10 years (1870-1880) to achieve 80% market dominance in oil refining, enabling mass productivity gains across industries as it scaled. AI's trajectory is far more compressed but also more nascent. Claude 3 became the first AI system to exceed average human intelligence (100 IQ) in March 2024, meaning we are just over one year into the era of above-average artificial intelligence. Despite the newness of the technology, adoption has been explosive in certain fields, even in 2024, GitHub's survey found 97% of developers used AI coding tools, with over 15 million programmers using Copilot - a 4x increase in just one year. Indeed, the tech sector tends to be in the vanguard of tech adoption, see crypto to cloud. This early adoption behaviour makes its current embrace of AI technology a crucial leading indicator of broader market potential. We can examine the usage patterns of programmers more closely to see where the technology might deliver most benefit. Significantly, developers are increasingly treating their Integrated Development Environments (IDEs) as more than a text editor - it's becoming an intelligence platform, or a new kind of operating system, with AI agents now transforming IDEs into universal command centres. This shift has created massive new companies: Cursor (Anysphere) raised $900M at a $9B valuation and is now reportedly seeking $10B, while OpenAI acquired Windsurf for $3B, demonstrating the market's recognition that AI-native development environments represent the future of programming.

> **"While tech forges ahead, some sectors clearly lag in AI uptake."**

I believe this demonstrates the potential for the rise of the intelligence layer, it's not about just writing code, workflow automation or asking a bot questions, it's about your Agents controlling Model Context Protocol (MCP) and plugging into every tool your computer and internet can connect to. This is the beginning of a new computing layer. For programmers, this means system administration agents that configure servers and manage deployments, data analysis agents that manipulate Excel spreadsheets and generate reports, communication agents that send Slack messages and schedule Teams meetings, and agents that research topics for themselves to work out solutions. These aren't isolated tools - they're coordinated agent teams where an agent delegates tasks to specialist sub-agents who work collaboratively to create an end result. The universal connectivity means anything with an API becomes accessible to AI agents including the agents themselves, turning the IDE into a command centre that can orchestrate entire business processes through natural language instructions.

While tech forges ahead, some sectors clearly lag in AI uptake. In larger organisations, early clunky or overly ambitious implementations may have left a sour taste in some executives' mouths. But where every penny counts - in startup land - people are onboarding the tools as soon as they emerge, the efficiency gains far outweighing any teething problems. The writing is on the wall, and it seems like the days of learning to use each tool might be on the way out. Your one tool is your AI interface. Yes, there can still be hallucinations, but discounting the power of AI is like not hiring any junior staff because they might make a mistake, or using a slide rule over Excel because there is less to go wrong...

This new intelligence layer is already creating a profound market disruption. Web page traffic has shifted as people bypass traditional interfaces and access services through AI. Search engines, comparison shopping sites, and information aggregators face existential threats now that AI can generate and act on information without requiring human navigation. Vendors must adapt or perish, focusing on API/data quality, AI integration capabilities, working out how to monetise access rather than user interface niceties for their competitive moat. This trend has obviously not gone unnoticed by the LLM companies themselves, for instance, Anthropic are already deploying their Claude for Financial Services platform, and all the players are positioning more as a one-stop shop rather than simple chat interfaces. As CTO at a tech startup, I feel that I am on the front lines of this transformation, and it seems to me that the productivity gains implied by Nvidia's valuation might not be unreasonable.

Banqora

The new battleground for talent: TradFi vs. digital assets

Chris Knight,
Managing Director,
LMAX Digital

The talent war in digital assets has reached a fever pitch, and it's no longer confined to the world of crypto-native start-ups. LMAX Group has been in financial services for decades and what we're seeing now is a convergence unlike anything we've witnessed before. Traditional finance (TradFi) and crypto-native firms are now competing fiercely for the same pool of top-tier talent, and it's a clear sign that the digital asset industry is maturing at pace.

This growing need for talent is a clear indicator that the industry is maturing and that institutional players are serious about building out their digital asset capabilities. It's no longer about a few tech-savvy enthusiasts; we're talking about major financial institutions pouring significant resources into this space. The recent passing of the GENIUS Act in the US, providing regulatory clarity for stablecoins, has been a key catalyst. This legislative action has signalled to major players in the Americas and beyond that the regulatory landscape is firming up, encouraging a flood of institutional capital and, in turn, increasing the demand for talent.

A look at the maturing market

The most significant new demand for digital asset traders is coming from hedge funds, non-bank market makers and traditional banks. While crypto-native firms continue to hire, the entry of these major institutional players is creating a new battleground for talent. Hedge funds are actively building out their digital asset trading desks to capitalise on market opportunities. Crypto-native firms are also evolving. They're not just hiring traders but also quants and specialists to optimise their execution, infrastructure and trading strategies to stay competitive as the market becomes more efficient. The days of simply having a trading 'genius' are over; firms need a deep bench of digital assets specialists to stay ahead.

The talent war is not limited to the UK and US. In financial hubs like Singapore and Hong Kong, regulatory clarity and government-backed initiatives are attracting top-tier talent. The Middle East, particularly the UAE, is also emerging as a major player, with progressive regulations and a burgeoning FinTech scene drawing professionals from around the globe. This fierce international competition is a testament to the fact that firms across all geographies recognise the immense potential of this market.

As institutional capital flows in, the value placed on expert digital asset traders will continue to grow. Firms are already competing for the best talent, and this is pushing compensation packages higher. We expect pay to be highly competitive and, in most cases, exceed what we're seeing in TradFi roles.

Fusion of TradFi and DeFi

The convergence of TradFi and digital assets is happening now. We are increasingly seeing both, operating and executing, side-by-side. Major banks are integrating digital assets directly onto their electronic FX desks, meaning FX traders will soon be trading digital assets alongside traditional currencies. At the same time, FX prime brokers are moving in, building the rails for institutional-scale participation and creating a seamless on-ramp for traditional traders to enter the market. The skills are highly transferable, and with the right technological infrastructure, a seasoned FX trader can become a highly effective digital asset trader.

This is where LMAX Group's technology and culture truly shine. We've been at the forefront of this convergence for years, building our own proprietary, ultra-low latency exchange infrastructure that supports both FX and digital asset trading. Our core technology, which has internal exchange latency under 85μs and 100% uptime, provides a level of speed and reliability that is unmatched in the industry. Attracting and retaining top-tier talent allows us to build the innovative and robust systems and products that our clients demand. This, in turn, facilitates the deeper liquidity and better execution that are the hallmarks of our platform and are relied on by many of the largest financial institutions globally.

Ahead of the curve

At LMAX Group, we believe that winning the talent war isn't about replacing traditional capital markets and people with new technology. Instead, it's about building an environment that recognises the value of this fusion. Our focus is on having the right teams in place with the skills to facilitate this convergence and build a robust ecosystem where traditional finance and digital assets can thrive together. This approach is what allows us to attract and retain the best talent in a fiercely competitive market.

The fight for talent is real, and it's a testament to the fact that digital assets are no longer a niche market. Digital assets are a fundamental part of the future of finance, and firms that can attract and retain the best talent will be the ones that win. At LMAX Group, we're ready. We have the technology, the culture and the vision to lead this charge.

"The most significant new demand for digital asset traders is coming from hedge funds, non-bank market makers and traditional banks. While crypto-native firms continue to hire, the entry of these major institutional players is creating a new battleground for talent."

LMAX Digital

Talent: Now more than ever

Jen Nayar, President & CEO, Sterling Trading Tech

The French remind us that "*The more things change, the more they stay the same.*" This is no truer than in FinTech. Historically and today, technology has driven efficiencies and transparency in global markets, playing a central role in their evolution.

Exchanges have the obligation to provide fair, liquid, and orderly markets. They are responsible for the data that drives liquidity, the transaction mechanisms and rules for participants and the instrument listings available for trading. From the buttonwood tree to the ticker tapes to phones and computers, exchanges have relied on technology to fulfil these roles.

Bankers and brokers have both relied on and innovated with technology to gain an edge in information asymmetry, enhancing both performance and profits. From Baron Reuter's pigeons carrying prices quickly from Paris to London, to today's AI analytics and APIs, technology has powered their enterprises.

There is, however, another constant underlying success in financial services: talent. At every point of technological innovation in markets, it has been people who envisioned and executed the advances. There has always been a healthy tension between innovators seeking to introduce new technologies and entities committed to legacy practices.

Historically, technology has outpaced both firms and regulators. Yet once available, it is only a matter of time before adoption follows. Certain innovations have failed – often because they were not well suited to financial services.

There is one constituency that ultimately drives both talent and technology in financial markets, without which they serve no purpose: the investor. Today, both retail and institutional investors have unprecedented, immediate access to information, execution, and reporting – capabilities not even envisioned until the advent of the mobile phone.

Regardless of where one stands in the equation, exchange, bank, broker – technologist, trader or investor – human intelligence and talent continue to undergird and propel market growth.

At the heart of every technological advance in the markets lies human talent. And through each innovation, despite predictions that humans will be out of the equation and "the machines will take over," we can confidently reply, as Mark Twain once did, "*The report of my death was an exaggeration.*"

The key for talent is to remain prepared, with a mindset of continuous openness to innovation and adaptation – to contribute to the creative forces that drive market evolution. To paraphrase the economist Kenneth Boulding: in periods of evolution, it is not the well-adapted who survive, but those who adapt well.

"At the heart of every technological advance in the markets lies human talent."

STERLING
TRADING TECH

Want to attract the best FinTech talent? Make work interesting, rewarding and fun

Three of us set up TransFICC in 2016. We all left big firms and were keen to build a company where we (as two technologists and one salesperson) would want to work.

What Makes a Great Place to Work?
We believe that autonomy, the opportunity to learn, to see ideas valued, to be involved in new enhancements and to see the results deployed with clients, all contribute to a great working environment.

Company Structure
We wanted to create a company where technologists were listened to, where expectations were reasonable, and where quality was valued as much as feature delivery.

We now have 60 people at TransFICC, where 80% are technologists and the company is small enough that you can understand at a high level what is happening everywhere. A flat structure is important, so that all our colleagues can contribute and make an impact. Whether this relates to software development, client management, sales or marketing, this structure allows opinions to be heard.

Flexible Working
When we first started working, we were all in the office and our technology teams sat together in pairs. Covid changed this and now teams use remote pair programming, working UK hours. They choose where they live and work, so that we now have team members in the UK, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Poland, and Greece. For family reasons, people have also worked UK hours on short stints from Brazil, USA, Latvia, India and even Australia.

Rotation between teams is also important. This provides exposure to a range of activities, avoids silos and encourages people to add to their skills. We rotate across Development teams, and also between different functions like Site Reliability Engineers.

Interesting Work and Improving Skills
Involving people in innovative technical work – in our case, solving complex Fixed Income workflow problems makes work more interesting.

We value empowerment and responsibility, so we provide people with the tools to get the job done, then trust them to deliver. Teams work directly with clients, which we think saves time and produces the best results.

Steve Toland, Co-Founder, TransFICC

We also ensure employees feel valued and have an opportunity to learn. For example, our Devs can learn from industry leaders who consult with TransFICC, like Dave Farley, an expert in Continuous Delivery.

Team Fit
In terms of hiring, we are open-minded about backgrounds and actively encourage diversity both in terms of previous experience and more traditional diversity considerations. More important are the technical skills people bring, the way in which they work from a process perspective, and their communication and collaborative working abilities.

Learning and Improving
In the nine years since we founded TransFICC we have gathered feedback from all employees (and from people who have turned down job offers). As a result, we have reviewed and upgraded our working practices many times.

We are fortunate that staff turnover is very low. Since we launched, only five Developers have resigned from TransFICC (and two of those rejoined this year). Of course, we are actively working on getting the other three back.

TransFICC

Matthew Cheung,
CEO, ipushpull

As AI agents join the trading desk, it's time to rethink control and capability

Enterprise chat has changed a lot over the past decade, but what's coming next is something far more fundamental. As chat platforms become the place where humans, bots and now agents interact, we're seeing the early stages of a shift in how financial workflows get executed, and who (or what) is doing the execution.
This isn't just about smarter chat. It's about reshaping how people and machines collaborate across regulated environments.

Chat Is Everywhere, But It Wasn't Built for This

Most institutions now operate across a patchwork of messaging platforms. Bloomberg Chat, Symphony, ICE Chat, LSEG Messenger, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal. Each is used for different reasons, often by necessity rather than design.

If you're a broker or salesperson, you go where your client is. Which means that even if a platform wasn't built with compliance in mind, it still gets used.

The fines show what happens when that reality meets regulation. Billions have been paid out over the use of "noncompliant" chat platforms. But that term is misleading. Most of these platforms were never meant to be compliant in the first place. They just filled a gap. WhatsApp is a good example. It's widely used, but difficult to govern. Disappearing messages, end-to-end encryption and an architecture that resists enterprise monitoring make it hard to archive or survey. You can't bolt on control after the fact.

Federated Chat Isn't New But It Matters More Now

Platforms like Symphony and LeapXpert introduced federation to bridge these fragmented environments. By acting as a conduit between systems like WhatsApp or WeChat and more structured enterprise chat, they make it possible to apply record-keeping, surveillance and compliance policies across a broader surface.

This bridging model isn't new, but it's becoming more relevant as firms try to balance user flexibility with operational control.

But connectivity alone doesn't address the deeper transformation that's starting to unfold.

Beyond Bots: What Agents Actually Bring to the Table

The word "agent" is used loosely right now. A lot of the time, people mean a very smart bot. In other cases, they're talking about autonomous systems that can perform tasks with little or no human involvement. There's a wide spectrum in between.

Today, the most common tools are still rule-based. Parsing messages using known syntax, mapping intent with structured inputs, using regex and lightweight logic to drive actions. This still works incredibly well, especially in trading workflows where messages are short, functional and precise.

But the rise of large language models has changed expectations. People now assume natural language is the default interface. That's not how trading desks typically operate. In price discovery and execution, people communicate with the fewest possible keystrokes. Every asset class has its own shorthand. Euro swaps don't look like FX, and neither looks like short interest rate futures. Even within those, regional and linguistic differences add complexity.

So, while LLMs are powerful, they're not always necessary. And when it comes to efficiency, simpler often wins. Especially when latency, cost and reliability matter.

Agentic Workflows Already Exist, Just Not in the Way Most Expect

We're already seeing clients test agents inside structured environments. One example: a digital whiteboard built around price history, trade data and client interaction.
Within that whiteboard sits an agent that can be queried directly, drawing on years of structured and semi-structured data.

This is useful in obvious ways, a broker who never forgets a price or trade, but also in subtle ones. It shifts the dynamic from memory to context. The agent isn't replacing anyone, but it changes the expectations of what can be recalled, retrieved or flagged in real time.

It also hints at what's coming next.

Autonomy Is a Feature and a Risk

The further you push into autonomous workflows, the more important control becomes. The moment an agent can trigger actions on its own, especially in environments where money moves, you need clear boundaries.

It's worth looking at history. Algo trading brought with it rules on explainability and internal controls. End-user computing like spreadsheets and macros triggered over $10 billion in fines and a range of regulatory responses, including BCBS 239.

Autonomous agents represent a similar inflection point. If left unchecked, they carry the same risk profile but at much greater scale and speed.

Right now, no financial institutions are letting agents trade completely unsupervised. But that's likely to change. And when it does, questions of governance, permissions and decision transparency will become critical.

You Can't Regulate What You Don't Understand

Most regulators are still getting to grips with GenAI. The EU AI Act is a step, but it wasn't designed for the specifics of capital markets. The FCA and others are watching the space, but we're not yet at the stage of detailed rulemaking.

That's not a reason to wait.

If you assume that every firm has thousands of people capable of building or integrating AI into their workflows, developers, BAs, traders with technical skills, then it makes sense to put guardrails in place now. Not to stifle innovation, but to channel it.

Firms already have strong governance models around data and risk. These should be extended to cover agentic workflows. Everything from permissioning and audit to access control and model explainability needs to be part of the stack, not layered on top.

Looking Ahead

This isn't a debate about whether AI agents belong in finance. They're already here, and the use cases are only growing.

The real question is whether we build the systems and safeguards needed to make them safe, useful and trusted. That means designing for control upfront. Ensuring every action taken by an agent is visible, traceable and reversible. And accepting that if we get this wrong, the consequences won't be hypothetical.

Agents that can act, reason and execute aren't science fiction anymore. They're just software. The challenge is making sure they work for us, not around us.

ipushpull

Unlocking financial intelligence: Sigma AI's vision for the future

Sigma AI's approach to product innovation is defined by a strategic vision that transcends traditional business intelligence, aiming to redefine how financial institutions utilise data to create new opportunities. At its core, this innovation is enabled by a high-performance, event-driven data platform that can ingest and analyse massive streams of real-time financial data with sub-millisecond latency. This foundation, built on a microservices architecture and the Rust programming language, ensures unmatched performance, safety, and the ability to innovate at a rapid pace without sacrificing reliability. Our modern, resilient architecture breaks free from the constraints of legacy systems, enabling Sigma to remain at the forefront of financial technology.

The company's product suite exemplifies a commitment to both core data capabilities and advanced AI applications. Products like AIMA, the AI-powered Market Analysis Assistant, demonstrate this by generating high-quality, natural-language financial analysis and synthesizing complex data for a range of professionals, from wealth managers to brokers. This is made possible by leveraging cutting-edge techniques such as Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) and Agentic AI. The use of RAG and our hierarchical agent ensures that analysis is accurate and contextually relevant by retrieving information from both internal and external knowledge bases, while Agentic AI enables the autonomous completion of complex analytical tasks through sophisticated reasoning chains. These techniques allow Sigma to deliver hyper-personalised reporting and enhanced decision-making tools, fundamentally changing how clients interact with their data.

Sigma has also developed a proprietary Sentiment Analysis tool, leveraging our core AI platform to assess the impact and relevance of news. By ingesting massive news streams in real-time, this tool provides granular sentiment scores and identifies potential market-moving events. This enables clients to gauge public perception and make more informed decisions by understanding how news is impacting market sentiment, ensuring they can react immediately to information rather than working with stale or outdated analysis.

Rachel Przybylski, Chief Product Officer, SIGMA

Beyond our core products, Sigma's innovation is deeply client-centric. The company recognises that adopting AI is a business transformation, not just a technology implementation. As a result, our solutions are designed to address common client hurdles like data silos, legacy infrastructure, and the critical need for regulatory compliance. By offering flexible deployment options and building data governance into every step of the process, Sigma ensures that our products can be seamlessly integrated into existing workflows, whether on-premise, in hybrid environments, or in the cloud. This end-to-end partnership model, from data engineering to continuous optimisation, ensures that clients achieve measurable business outcomes and ongoing value.

The financial services industry stands at a crossroads where timely and tailored insights are no longer a luxury but a necessity. The true competitive advantage comes from using AI to unlock new opportunities, create differentiated client experiences, and extract value from data in ways that were previously impossible. At Sigma, we are proud to be at the forefront of this transformation—building the platforms, products, and partnerships that empower clients with the immediate, hyper-personalised financial analytics they need to stay ahead of the curve. This focus on personalisation and immediacy is what defines the next era of financial intelligence.

SIGMA

Why belonging is the blueprint for innovation

Community is no longer a side project in technology. It is the foundation for retention, progress, and trust.

Jude Davis,
Founder, The BOP

In 2025, the conversation about the future of work has shifted. It is no longer about whether hybrid working is here to stay. It is about how people stay connected, motivated, and inspired when the physical office is no longer the heart of community.

Technology companies, especially in financial technology, face a defining question: if culture now lives online as much as in person, how do you create a community that makes people feel they belong?

Why community matters now

The last few years have shown that wellbeing, flexibility, and purpose matter as much as pay. The best workplaces are those that foster connection. A survey of Top 1% Workplace Award winners found that collaboration, inclusion, and strong leadership consistently outperformed gimmicks or perks.

Yet too many organisations still treat community as a side project. Without intention, the word becomes hollow. Employees want more. They want spaces where their voices matter, where support is visible, and where growth is shared. In a competitive technology landscape, community is no longer optional. It is a core driver of retention, productivity, and innovation.

Challenges communities face

The challenge is clear. Hybrid work has left many people disconnected. High turnover in technology reflects weak cultures where values are not lived. For underrepresented groups, the sense of isolation is sharper.

Nearly 20% of Black employees in the UK say they feel "not confident at all" in speaking up at work. Leadership representation remains scarce. Despite being 18% of the UK population, Black and minority ethnic professionals hold just 1.5% of FTSE 100 board positions. These gaps are not about talent. They are about access, role models, and community.

Why community is critical in technology

Technology thrives on collaboration. Some of the best workplaces in financial technology actively design for this, rotating developers through client desks, or giving teams time to explore new ideas. They understand innovation is social before it is technical.

Community also accelerates learning. In an industry disrupted by artificial intelligence, blockchain, and new regulation, no single employee can hold all the knowledge. The most resilient teams are those that share, teach, and adapt together.

My journey to The BOP

I spent 12 years at Apple, working across marketing for different categories and products. Alongside that, I co-chaired Black at Apple, the company's diversity network in the UK. It was there that I saw the power of community first-hand. A network is not just an employee group. It is a lifeline. It gives people permission to bring their full selves to work, and it creates a pipeline of support that quietly shapes careers.

When I left Apple to focus on my own ventures, I wanted to build on that experience. The Black Opportunities Platform (The BOP) was born from a simple observation: Black professionals do not lack talent, they lack access. Access to networks, mentors, and opportunities that others take for granted.

The BOP is not fully launched yet, but the momentum is already clear. We have gathered strong interest through our sign-up list and social channels. One of our early members shared this with me: "*Through The BOP network I connected with another Black peer who guided me through a tough promotion process. That support helped me secure the role. Without that connection, I do not think I would have made it.*"

That is what community does. It changes trajectories in ways no corporate policy can.

Extending community through Hey Jude

Community also takes different shapes. Alongside The BOP, I run *Hey Jude*, a newsletter on LinkedIn where Black professionals share their workplace dilemmas anonymously. These stories, covering issues such as confidence, communication, and culture, reveal something important. People discover they are not alone. Their challenges are shared by many others.

The response has been powerful. By opening a safe space for honesty, the newsletter has created community through conversation. Readers learn from one another's dilemmas and see their own experiences reflected back. This is the essence of belonging: realising that your story is part of a larger one.

How technology companies can build genuine community

For companies in technology, the lesson is simple. Community cannot be bolted on; it must be built in.

That means:

- **Listening at every level.** Employees need to be involved in shaping culture, not just receiving it.
- Designing for inclusion. Accessibility, allyship, and representation must be considered from the start.
- Mentoring with intent. Underrepresented employees should see clear pathways to leadership.
- Recognising contribution. Community flourishes when people feel their impact is valued.

These are not costly initiatives. They are deliberate choices. The companies that succeed in the next decade will be those that understand community as infrastructure, not as afterthought.

> "Technology thrives on collaboration. Some of the best workplaces in financial technology actively design for this..."

The BOP as a blueprint for online community

The BOP aims to provide that infrastructure at scale. A digital home where Black professionals can connect, learn, and grow. A space where the focus is on reciprocity: sharing knowledge, amplifying opportunities, and building trust.

Our design is intentional. It is built to meet real needs with content, tools, and community that support people in their careers. That means audio and video lessons from senior leaders, guides for navigating the workplace, and safe spaces for dialogue.

The blueprint is clear: digital first, human at heart. If the workplace of 2025 is increasingly virtual, then the communities that thrive will be those that centre belonging.

Community as the future

Community has always been the invisible driver of progress. What is different now is that it must be designed with as much care as any product. For technology companies, this is not a soft issue. It is the difference between retaining great talent or losing it, between breakthrough innovation or stagnation.

The BOP is one example of what that future could look like. Not a replacement for workplace culture, but a complement to it. A model for how online communities can bridge the gaps that too many still fall through.

In the end, the most powerful technology we have is each other.

The BOP
The Black Opportunities Platform

Frictionless finance: how banks are redefining vendor software consumption

Tom Darvall,
Managing Director,
Caplin Systems

In today's financial services industry, achieving frictionless finance is as much about people as it is about technology. The banks and vendors that stand out are those creating workplaces where technologists are empowered to do their best work, drive innovation with impact, and lead with purpose. This environment doesn't just attract talent, it accelerates transformation.

The industry as a whole, but particularly in areas like Fixed Income, Currencies, and Commodities (FICC) trading, is undergoing a transformation. As banks navigate a competitive landscape with tightening margins and increasing regulatory scrutiny, a new paradigm is emerging: the demand for vendor software that offers a **frictionless, flexible, and future-proofed experience**. Technologists at these institutions are no longer content with monolithic, "black-box" solutions. Instead, they seek a hybrid approach that combines the speed of buying with the control of building, allowing them to innovate rapidly and stay ahead of the curve.

The Race to Zero: Cost Pressures and the Push for Frictionless Software

The FICC market's shift toward electronic trading is a direct response to a "race to zero" on trade costs. As profit margins on traditional products shrink, banks are under immense pressure to find efficiencies wherever they can. This dynamic has a direct impact on how they consume technology, making the need for frictionless software a top priority for technologists. Manual processes, from phone calls and emails to cumbersome data entry, add both time and expense to every transaction, pushing up the cost base. To stay competitive, banks are systematically eliminating these touchpoints in favour of automated, digital workflows.

This shift is not merely an internal cost-cutting exercise; it's a strategic necessity driven by external factors. Regulatory bodies are demanding more transparency. For example, regulations like MiFID II require transactions to have a clear, auditable digital trail. Automated, electronic systems provide this trail by default, making compliance simpler and less labor-intensive. Beyond regulation, client expectations have also evolved. Both corporate clients and internal staff now expect a digitally capable bank that offers a seamless, intuitive experience.

Evidence from the market underscores this shift. JP Morgan's The e-Trading Edit Survey 2025, which gathered responses from over 4,200 institutional traders worldwide, cited ease of access and experience as the top priority (28%) across all products and regions, ahead of post-execution monitoring (22%) and customer support (18%). The findings reinforce that seamless, user-friendly design is now central to how trading technology is judged.

This confluence of factors, tighter margins, regulatory demands, and changing expectations, has forced banks to fundamentally rethink their technology. They need solutions that can be implemented and integrated with minimal friction, delivering a quick return on investment. The goal is to create a technology stack that is not only robust but also agile enough to adapt to new market demands without requiring a massive, multi-year overhaul.

The New Rules of Technology Infrastructure

Pressures to reduce the costs of trading platform technology infrastructure have created a clear demand for solutions that are **future-proofed, easier to manage, and less specialised**. Technologists want to move away from expensive, bespoke systems that require an "army of experts" to maintain. They are looking for solutions that leverage common, in-demand technologies, making it easier to hire and retain talent. The ideal vendor solution is one that fits seamlessly into a modern, agile IT environment, often delivered as Software as a Service (SaaS).

The Rise of the "Buy and Build" Hybrid Model

Historically, the choice between building and buying software was a binary one. A "build-only" mentality often arose from negative past experiences with vendors who delivered inflexible or costly-to-augment solutions. Given the career risk associated with selecting a vendor that fails to deliver, bank executives have become cautious.

However, the modern approach is a "**buy and build**" hybrid model. Rather than a zero-sum game, banks now seek a core vendor product that can be integrated and customised to meet their unique needs. This model addresses a critical concern for the front office: **time to value**. By starting with a robust, off-the-shelf solution, banks can get up and running quickly while retaining the flexibility to build unique capabilities on top of it.

No two banks are identical. Their distinct operational priorities, local regulatory requirements, and architectural preferences mean that even standardised solutions require adaptation. This hybrid model allows institutions to leverage best-in-class vendor products while ensuring the technology aligns perfectly with their strategic goals and delivers a truly differentiated experience for both clients and internal staff. This approach is not just about efficiency; it's about empowerment, giving banks the agility to respond to market changes and the control to shape their own technological destiny.

The Road Ahead: Modular and Iterative Innovation

The future of financial technology lies in modularity and iterative delivery. Banks are moving away from monolithic systems towards a "plug and play" model where individual features and components can be seamlessly integrated and rolled out. This approach provides banks with the control they desire, allowing them to add their own unique tweaks and customisations without disrupting the entire system. More importantly, it ensures a frictionless rollout and upgrade path, enabling institutions to realise time to value much faster. This iterative delivery model allows for continuous improvement, where single features can be upgraded as part of a cohesive whole, keeping the technology stack current and competitive.

In the near future, the industry could evolve toward an "app store" model for trading applications, where banks can select and assemble the specific modules they need, creating a bespoke, self-service trading platform tailored to their exact requirements. It's important that vendors and banks work together on this vision to make sure the technology matches the ever-increasing demands.

Ultimately, frictionless finance is not only a story of modularity, agility, and smarter vendor partnerships - it's also a story of culture. The firms that will lead the industry forward are those that combine technical excellence with environments that empower their people to innovate, collaborate, and shape meaningful change.

CAPLIN

Beyond branded merch: the key components to effective onboarding

Annabel Chung,
EMEA HR Lead,
FlexTrade Systems

In 2026, FlexTrade will mark its 30th anniversary, a milestone that reflects three decades of delivering innovative and cutting-edge trading technology to the buy-side and sell-side trading communities. As we look ahead, continuing to activate our strategic vision depends not only on the technology we build, but on the talent we attract, and crucially, how we onboard that talent.

Onboarding is often perceived as a simple checklist: a welcome email, a high-tech desk setup, and the latest snazzy branded merchandise. While these are all important components and great tools for creating an immediate "feel-good factor", they represent just one piece of a much larger puzzle.

At its core, onboarding is about creating an environment that fosters contribution, builds confidence, and ensures alignment with our core values, setting both the individual and the business up for success. From the individual's perspective, the faster a new hire can get up to speed, the sooner they can be empowered to do their best work. From FlexTrade's perspective, this translates into a faster speed to impact, accelerating the value we deliver to clients.

It begins by placing new joiners in the right teams. From client services to product development, new employees work within a mix of local and global, interconnected teams, which offer exposure to the various areas of the business they need to learn effectively. We endeavour to ensure that the teams they join offer the optimal blend of seniority, experience, and diverse thought that sets them up quickly. Moreover, many managers within the FlexTrade team themselves started as junior employees before progressing, so they understand the level of support needed, having experienced the process firsthand.

Continuous development is also key. Whether it's understanding the fundamental issue a new solution or partner integration aims to solve for the end client, or understanding market dynamics within Fixed Income, the ability to access high-quality learning resources, a blend of in-person and virtual tools, is becoming critical. For instance, we have recently launched an online education resource centre, providing employees with the freedom to explore topics in depth, revisit materials as needed, and learn at their own pace.

However, perhaps the most overlooked aspect of onboarding is ensuring that new joiners feel the pulse of the organisation, not just its mission and values, but how those are lived out day-to-day. This includes exposure to leadership, cross-functional collaboration, and opportunities to contribute early in the process to their new roles and teams. When people feel connected to the bigger picture, they're more likely to stay, grow, and lead.

Onboarding isn't a one-off event. It's much more than that. It's a strategic investment that can make the difference between "someone who joins" and "someone who belongs". In the ongoing battle for talent that we see across industries, that difference matters more so than ever.

FLEXTRADE
Trade your best.

Strategic partnerships in electronic trading: transparency, fair value, market knowledge, and collaboration as imperatives

Himesh Soneji,
Managing Director,
Tech Advocates

In electronic trading, competitive advantage is defined by latency, robust infrastructure, and the ability to attract and retain rare talent. Yet, beyond algorithms and execution speed, one of the most consequential decisions a firm makes lies outside of the trade itself: the selection of external partners. Vendors, recruitment agencies, and service providers are not just ancillary resources—they are strategic enablers of performance.

The firms that thrive long term are those that approach partner selection not as procurement, but as a boardroom-level strategic choice. In this environment, four imperatives consistently emerge as differentiators of successful partnerships: transparency, fair pricing, market knowledge, and continual collaboration.

From Transactional Suppliers to Strategic Enablers

Electronic trading firms operate in an ecosystem where the margin for error is negligible. Technology failures, talent gaps, or data quality issues can directly erode profitability. This reality elevates vendors, recruitment agencies, and strategic partners beyond the status of suppliers. They must be understood as extensions of the enterprise, contributors to resilience, agility, and long-term competitiveness.

Decision-makers therefore ask not only "What service is being offered?" but also "Does this partner understand the nuances of financial markets deeply enough to advance our strategic position?"

The Non-Negotiable of Transparency

Trust is the cornerstone of every partnership in financial markets. Without transparency, there can be no trust. For recruitment agencies, transparency means explaining sourcing strategies, sharing candidate feedback, and clarifying fee structures. For technology providers, it involves openness about infrastructure and update roadmaps. For data vendors, it demands clarity on methodology, latency, and coverage.

Hidden terms or concealed limitations are incompatible with the standards of accountability required in trading. Transparency is not simply a differentiator, it is the baseline requirement for any vendor to be taken seriously.

Reframing Fair Pricing as Strategic Value

Pricing discussions in electronic trading are not about cost minimisation; they are about value maximisation. The selection criteria shift from "lowest cost" to "responsibility and fairness in sharing value."

Vendors and agencies are expected to justify their commercial propositions against measurable outcomes: speed, quality, or innovation. Fair pricing signals integrity, limits operational surprises, and demonstrates that the partner is investing in shared success rather than short-term extraction.

Firms view pricing fairness not only as an economic issue but as a strategic signal of alignment.

Market Knowledge as a Decisive Differentiator

Perhaps the most overlooked yet decisive element in partner selection is market knowledge. In an industry as fluid and complex as electronic trading, generic service provision is insufficient. True strategic partners bring domain insight; an ability to understand trends in market structure, regulatory change, technology evolution, and competitive dynamics.

■ For recruitment agencies, this might be intimate knowledge of where the next wave of quantitative talent is emerging, how compensation benchmarks are shifting, or how buy-side and sell-side firms are repositioning to compete.

■ **For technology vendors, market knowledge could translate into anticipating shifts such as the rise of cloud-native trading systems or recognising how exchanges' fee structures impact trading strategies.**

■ **For data providers, deep market knowledge means curating feeds not just for completeness but for trading utility, prioritising what drives profits and reduces risk.**

Market knowledge plays a dual role: it enables partners to be more proactive in solving problems, and it elevates them as true advisors rather than delivery agents. The firms that integrate market-knowledgeable partners gain a different form of competitive advantage, resilience against uncertainty.

Collaboration as a Competitive Multiplier

Even the most knowledgeable and transparent partner must be committed to continual collaboration. Markets evolve swiftly, and no static solution remains fit for purpose. The most successful relationships in electronic trading are not contractual obligations, but living alliances.

> "Trust is the cornerstone of every partnership in financial markets. Without transparency, there can be no trust"

Continual collaboration allows partners to act as sounding boards for innovation, contributors to strategic shifts, and co-creators of bespoke solutions. This requires ongoing engagement beyond quarterly reviews; it thrives on trust, dialogue, and shared accountability. Over time, collaboration transforms vendors into partners in innovation.

Conclusion: Partner Selection as Market Strategy

Choosing a vendor, recruitment agency, or strategic partner in electronic trading is not an operational tick-box exercise, it is a strategic decision that can shape competitive outcomes.

The firms most likely to excel in this environment build their partnerships around four imperatives: transparency to establish trust, fair pricing to ensure balanced value creation, market knowledge to provide insight beyond service execution, and continual collaboration to ensure resilience through change.

In such a complex and demanding industry, where every microsecond counts, partnerships are not service contracts. They are alliances built on shared understanding, aligned incentives, and future-focused collaboration. The firms that succeed in vendor and partner selection are those that look beyond utility to find partners who act as co-architects of their long-term success.

Growing careers, growing delta

Why investing in our people is the smartest thing we do

At Delta Financial Systems, I've always believed that if we focus on growing our people, the business will take care of itself. For me, success isn't about quick wins or plugging short-term gaps – it's about creating a place where people can build long, rewarding careers alongside the growth of Delta.

Building Success from Within

We've learned over the years that skills and experience matter, but they're not the whole story. Attitude, curiosity, and a willingness to learn are just as important – maybe more.

That's why many of our opportunities start at the junior level. It gives us the chance to spot potential early, nurture talent from the ground up, and shape careers that last.

Take Natasha's journey. She joined us as a trainee with zero background in pensions or software support. With the right mentoring, she quickly found her feet – and now she's the one mentoring others. Today, she's completing an apprenticeship in software support and gearing up for a senior role. That's what growth looks like: personal and professional, side by side.

Then there's Phil. He joined as an apprentice developer back in 2013 and has done it all – working across legacy and Platinum products, driving major migration projects, and now thriving as a Test Lead. Over a decade on, he's proof that investing in talent pays off, for both the individual and the business.

Pathways for Everyone

This "grow from within" philosophy runs right through the business. In fact, our entire senior leadership team started their Delta journeys in more junior roles. They don't just understand our culture – they've lived it.

Earlier this year, when our CIO retired, we reshaped our Executive team. Every single appointment came from within. And here's the ripple effect: those changes opened up a number of further opportunities across the organisation. It means we retain and deepen our DNA at every turn, and if someone should decide to leave us, we have a pool of ambitious talent hungry for the next step in their career.

That's what career progression should look like – not just one person stepping up, but a chain reaction of growth.

Learning Together

Growth isn't always about climbing the ladder – sometimes it's about broadening your perspective. That's why we regularly bring in external trainers, guest speakers, and industry experts to challenge our thinking

Billy Chalk, Managing Director, Delta FS

and stretch our skills.

These sessions help us become better leaders, better professionals, and better teammates – not just within Delta, but in the wider world.

A Culture of Growth

When our people thrive, Delta thrives. Career journeys here aren't one-size-fits-all. Sometimes they're straightforward. Sometimes they take a sideways step. But they're always moving forward.

And that's what makes Delta special. We celebrate individual wins, but every success is shared – because when one person grows, the whole team gets stronger.

For me, investing in people is the most important part of my job. It's what turns a job into a career, and a business into a community. That's why building growth from within isn't just a strategy – it's who we are.

delta
FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

Belonging in the workplace: the quiet power at the edge

What elevates a workplace? Innovation and delivery matter, and yet nothing matches the strength of belonging, where presence transforms into genuine voices and unleashes the potential of human beings.

Belonging flourishes when perspectives are heard. Microaggressions steadily erode it. McKinsey's Women in the Workplace report (2024) shows that individuals who face microaggressions are far more likely to feel burned out, consider quitting, or perceive inequality. The Adecco Group highlights how persistent exclusion doubles burnout risk.

In the FinTech industry, the speed and intensity make belonging more than a cultural ideal; it becomes a performance driver. Psychological safety, inclusion, and belonging, though, are critical success factors for every workplace in every industry.

Belonging drives well-being and productivity. Indeed's Work Happiness Score places belonging above salary as the key driver of workplace well-being. The American Psychological Association outlines how connection fosters healthier and more productive teams. Insights from Inspiring Workplaces show how inclusive cultures reduce turnover, lift performance, and strengthen employer reputation.

Leaving teams because of poor belonging carries a real cost. The 2025 Lovelace Report by Oliver Wyman and WeAreTechWomen finds UK tech loses £2–3.5 billion annually due to talent exiting roles or the sector, amplified by broken career systems that fail to recognise or advance people. This picture holds true across all sectors. Harvard Business Review estimates that high belonging can generate annual savings of $52 million for a 10,000-person company, through higher performance, lower turnover, and reduced sick leave. Gallup estimates the global cost of disengagement, often a symptom of weak belonging, at $8.8 trillion, equivalent to nearly 9% of global GDP. Belonging is both a human need and a commercial imperative.

Here's a story that has stayed with me. A subject-matter expert, early in her journey, joined a senior client meeting. She was present, but there was no space created for her voice to be heard. She had the knowledge and expertise to contribute richly to the discussion,

Tribeni Chougule, Founder, Kinspace, Inclusive Impact Coach & Consultant

KINSPACE
Embrace Identity, Accelerate Impact

though she remained invisible. She walked out feeling excluded, though she was visibly included. This shows why a culture of belonging must be authentic rather than performative.

Inclusive leaders can shift this very common occurrence. Their people strategy places greater emphasis on those at the edges of their teams, the newcomer, the differently abled colleague, the quieter voice, or those who stand apart. Permaculture teaches that edges, where ecosystems meet, are the most fertile and resilient. When leaders tend to the people at the edges of the team, the whole team gains strength, and performance increases.

In the age of AI, belonging sustains trust and meaning. A healthy belonging culture is a greater imperative for the workplace, one that enables AI and human beings to coexist harmoniously. A 2025 study on AI-driven workplace well-being emphasises that transparent, human-centred implementation preserves job satisfaction and purpose.

Workplaces that thrive will be those where people feel empowered, trusted, valued, and experience true belonging. Belonging is the engine of resilience, innovation, and commercial growth. Cultures that honour belonging unlock discretionary effort, protect retention, and create a reputation that attracts the best talent. In a world reshaped by technology and transition, belonging remains the human foundation on which organisations are built. The question for leaders is whether they can afford the cost of ignoring it.

Revolutionising listed derivatives block trading: the power of innovation and technology

Ben Parker,
Co-Founder & COO, InTick

For far too long, listed derivatives block trading has been characterised by outdated and highly complex manual processes. Despite the technological revolution impacting nearly every other asset class, this critical segment of financial markets has remained largely untouched by innovation.

The reality of executing large block orders in listed derivatives trading today involves significant manual pre-and post-trade information exchanges, leading to costly, inefficient, and time-intensive workflows for both buy-side and sell-side market participants. This lack of electronification, centralised pricing information, and independent matching places unnecessary constraints and introduces risk, often leaving potential profitable trading opportunities unrealised.

The industry has historically deemed automation too complex to implement in this space, creating a stalemate. The fundamental problem for market participants is the speed and effort required in securing a block trade. As innovators and ex-market participants, we recognised that this current state often leads to suboptimal trading outcomes; however, we also recognised that the market did not require, or want to, reinvent its workflows.

We knew there was a need to replicate the workflows the market is familiar with, whilst significantly re-thinking how listed derivatives block trading is done.

> “The fundamental problem for market participants is the speed and effort required in securing a block trade”

InTick was born from a determination to challenge the status quo in listed derivatives block trading

When we launched a year ago, we brought together the best practitioners and technology to develop a platform that simplified and minimised the number of actions carried out during listed derivatives block trading. The result is InTick: an independent blocking network, fit for purpose, and uniquely designed for the listed derivatives blocking market from the outset.

InTick digitises manual, bilateral processes conducted over several platforms, providing a single source of truth for listed derivatives pricing. The platform delivers the multi-sourced, accurate, and actionable price and trade information that firms so critically need to trade efficiently and profitably.

The industry has welcomed innovation and automation in listed derivatives block trading

The market's reception has been enthusiastic, with both buy-side and sell-side participants embracing the much-needed innovation that enables all-to-all matching and reliable RFQ data.

> “At its heart, InTick is an easy-to-use platform that enables organisations to optimise their block-listed derivatives trading and drive business growth”

Going live during the ICE Gilt and Eurex Fixed Income futures rolls in June 2025, the platform immediately began facilitating the exchange of active block orders. Partnering with a Tier 1 Executing Broker, the go-live saw multi-jurisdictional investment managers and hedge funds sharing liquidity and processing orders electronically. As a result, the InTick network is rapidly expanding, attracting a growing community.

What's more, funding raised this summer serves to fuel ongoing investment in our technological infrastructure, further expanding InTick's offering to include all major products within listed derivatives.

What we set out to do was to provide the innovation required to reshape complex, high-touch market trading. And we are already seeing that the data and value analysis available to users opens up previously untapped insights to support better trading decisions. With InTick, we are finally delivering transformative innovation to the industry. At its heart, InTick is an easy-to-use platform that enables organisations to optimise their block-listed derivatives trading and drive business growth.

InTick

University of East London centre of FinTech: driving innovation, inclusion, and the future of finance

Dr Fahimeh Jafari,
Senior Lecturer in AI & Big Data and
Associate Director of FinTech Centre,
ACE School, University of East London

In today's rapidly evolving financial landscape, FinTech is transforming how we engage with money, technology, and regulation. At the forefront of this shift is the University of East London (UEL) Centre of FinTech, a dynamic hub based within the Royal Docks School of Business and Law in collaboration with the School of Architecture, Computing and Engineering.

Its vision—to become the global centre for the creation and communication of practice-led knowledge that enables FinTech to be more inclusive, robust, and sustainable—guides a comprehensive portfolio of activity, spanning research, education, industry collaboration, and policy engagement.

Recognised as the Best Academic Provider of a FinTech Programme at the 2024 FinTech Marketing Global Awards, the Centre has established itself as a powerful force in preparing the next generation of FinTech professionals while influencing the sector's evolution nationally and internationally.

Connecting Academia and Industry

The Centre thrives on cross-disciplinary collaboration and is deeply embedded in the FinTech ecosystem. It works closely with regulators, financial institutions, technology innovators, and policymakers to bridge the gap between academic research and industry practice.

Among its many collaborators are the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), HSBC, Barclays, the Algorand Foundation, Intelligent Voice, and iPushPull. These are just a few examples of a much larger network of partners. Together, they support a constant exchange of knowledge and co-designed initiatives that keep the Centre's teaching and research relevant to the rapidly changing sector.

Through these relationships, the Centre addresses real-world challenges while positioning UEL as a trusted partner for organisations seeking to innovate responsibly and inclusively. The collaborations highlighted here represent only a fraction of the Centre's extensive and growing network.

Empowering Students

Students are at the heart of the Centre's mission and benefit from experiential learning opportunities that extend well beyond the classroom. The Centre's approach enables students to gain hands-on experience through live projects, policy consultations, industry challenges, and mentoring programmes.

A standout initiative is the UEL Centre of FinTech Hackathon, designed to replicate the innovation journey from concept to product. Delivered in two stages, the first phase, co-hosted with TerraDock, brought together students from law, business, computer science, and finance to design creative solutions to sustainability and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) challenges.

The most promising ideas progressed to the second phase, where selected teams developed prototypes and presented them to judges at the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) headquarters. This two-stage format gave students the chance to move from ideation to implementation while engaging directly with senior professionals. It also provided a platform for them to tackle pressing global challenges through innovative, practical solutions.

"Students are at the heart of the Centre's mission and benefit from experiential learning opportunities that extend well beyond the classroom."

Another important initiative is the FCA–UEL Professional Mentoring Programme, which connects students with experienced professionals from the regulatory and financial services sectors. This programme has been transformative for many participants, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds who may face barriers to professional networks. It builds confidence, fosters leadership skills, and provides invaluable insights into the sector.

These are just two examples of the many opportunities offered to ensure UEL students graduate with technical and analytical expertise, ethical awareness, and the industry connections needed to make a meaningful impact in FinTech.

Driving Research and Policy

Research and policy engagement are central to the Centre's identity. Its staff and collaborators lead a diverse portfolio of projects exploring emerging technologies, regulation, and the societal impacts of FinTech.

The Centre plays an active role in national and international discussions about the future of financial services. It has contributed to high-level forums hosted by the Bank of England, the City of London Corporation, and the Inclusive FinTech Forum in Kigali, Rwanda. Topics include digital public infrastructure, blockchain's role in capital markets, and the regulation of decentralised finance (DeFi).

The Centre also provides expertise to government and regulatory consultations on issues such as the digital pound, crypto-assets regulation, and strategies for improving financial inclusion.

International collaboration further strengthens its research impact. A recent joint symposium with the University of South Florida brought together academics and students from across continents to explore digital assets, AI in finance, and regulatory technology (RegTech). This partnership reflects the Centre's growing role in shaping global FinTech discourse through shared

HARRINGTON STARR
Your Success. Our Business

> **“The Centre also runs a vibrant programme of events, bringing students, researchers, and professionals together to exchange ideas and explore emerging issues.”**

knowledge and innovation.

These examples highlight only a small part of the Centre’s extensive research activity, which continues to expand in response to new challenges and opportunities.

Learning from Experts

The Centre also runs a vibrant programme of events, bringing students, researchers, and professionals together to exchange ideas and explore emerging issues. These range from seminars and workshops to high-profile conferences and roundtables.

Recent highlights include a lecture by the Bank of England on Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs), alongside specialist sessions from FCA experts on open finance, regulatory sandboxes, and global RegTech trends.

Other events have explored topics such as FinTech and fraud prevention, financial services in the metaverse, and the rapid growth of Islamic FinTech. The Centre also produces podcasts featuring discussions on crypto regulation, startup journeys, and careers in FinTech, making these insights accessible to a global audience.

These events represent just a glimpse of the many ways the Centre keeps its community connected to the forefront of financial innovation and regulation.

Innovation with Purpose

What truly distinguishes the Centre of FinTech is its unwavering commitment to inclusive innovation. It recognises that access to financial systems and digital technologies remains unequal.

Through wide-ranging education, research, and engagement activities, the Centre works to close these gaps and ensure that technological progress benefits diverse communities. This focus is embedded across everything the Centre does—from student support and curriculum design to international projects promoting financial literacy and ethical leadership.

While the initiatives mentioned here provide a snapshot, they represent only part of the Centre’s broader work to make FinTech more equitable and sustainable.

Looking Forward

Since its launch, marked by a landmark event at the Houses of Parliament, hosted by Stephen Timms MP and Ron Kalifa OBE, the Centre has grown rapidly, building a strong reputation as a trusted partner for research, education, and industry engagement.

Winning the FinTech Marketing Global Award confirmed the value of its distinctive model, which combines academic rigour with practical application and social impact.

Looking ahead, the Centre aims to deepen its global partnerships, lead pioneering research into areas such as AI-driven financial systems, and continue shaping policy and regulation to create a FinTech ecosystem that is innovative, ethical, and inclusive. These ambitions reflect its broader vision: to define the future of financial technology while ensuring it serves the needs of society as a whole.

University of East London | Centre of FinTech

Rebooting talent: why FinTech needs career returners

Julianne Miles, Co-Founder, Career Returners and Hazel Little, CEO, Career Returners

FinTech is one of the UK's fastest-growing sectors, blending innovation and agility. Yet it faces two persistent challenges: talent shortages and a lack of gender balance. According to a 2023 EY report, women represent just 28% of the FinTech workforce, compared to 44% in financial services. At the same time, the sector is grappling with rapid skills shifts, with over 40% of core workforce skills expected to change within five years (WEF, 2025). To stay competitive, FinTech needs experienced, adaptable, and motivated professionals to build a workforce for the future.

Career returners, professionals resuming work after a career break, offer a strategic solution. They bring deep experience, fresh perspectives, and a mindset geared for learning. Yet despite their potential, returners remain largely overlooked in FinTech hiring.

The Hidden Talent Pool

Career returners have taken extended breaks for reasons such as childcare, eldercare, health, or relocation. Within our 10,000-strong Career Returners Professional Community, 80% have five or more years of experience and 50% have ten or more years. Many proactively upskill before returning, and our Career Returners Indicator 2025 found that nearly 80% take courses to refresh their skills.

Returners offer:

- **Relevant experience:** Finance and tech are the most common backgrounds.
- **Fresh perspectives:** Life experiences enrich team decision-making.
- **Commitment:** Returners are highly motivated to re-establish their careers and contribute meaningfully.
- **Transferable skills:** Adaptability, empathy, resilience, and problem-solving are often strengthened during career breaks.

Barriers to Re-entry

However, returners face multiple hurdles when they are ready to return, both structural and personal:

- **AI-entrenched screening bias:** Recruitment teams are increasingly relying on AI to manage high application volumes. While this can improve efficiency, algorithms often prioritise recent experience, excluding returner candidates. This entrenches existing bias. A 2024 REC study found that recent experience is one of the top two screening factors in the UK - and the top factor in London and SMEs.
- **Outdated perceptions:** In fast-moving sectors, there's a tendency to equate recent experience with capability. This creates a false perception that skills erode, or even disappear, during a career break.
- **Confidence dip:** Time away from the workplace typically erodes professional identity and self-belief. Our Career Returners Indicator consistently finds that around 90% of returners feel their confidence has taken a hit.
- **Limited targeted and supportive re-entry routes:** While some financial services firms like Aviva and J.P. Morgan Chase have successfully embedded annual returner programmes, FinTech has few targeted pathways for experienced hires.

These barriers mean that highly skilled returners often feel forced to accept entry-level roles, resulting in a loss of valuable talent.

Returners as Future-Ready Talent

In a sector where yesterday's expertise may not solve tomorrow's problems, returners offer agility and resilience. Many have upskilled during their break and are ready to contribute from day one. Their mindset of lifelong learning makes them ideal for FinTech's evolving landscape.

What Needs to Change

Julianne's new book *Return Journey: How to Get Back to Work and Thrive After a Career Break* provides a step-by-step roadmap for how individuals can take personal action to overcome these return-to-work barriers. To unlock the potential of career returners, we also need employers to open their doors by making structural changes to recruitment and onboarding processes:

1. Remove screening filters based on recent experience

Use recent experience only where essential, not as a default criterion. See our joint Career Returners / REC Guidance for Recruiters.

2. Train interviewers to recognise returner value

Help hiring managers explore the strengths gained during career breaks and challenge outdated assumptions. This starts to make assessment processes more inclusive of returner candidates. Celebrating returner hires, highlighting success stories, and showcasing returner impact will create a longer-term mindset shift.

3. Create targeted returner pathways

Target returners as a distinct talent pool rather than assessing them against candidates within the workforce. Over the last decade, the returnship has been proven to be a successful returner programme format. Through our partnership programmes at Career Returners, we have successfully re-integrated over 3,500 returners. Returners join as a cohort on a paid placement, with wraparound support, and a high likelihood of a permanent role at the end. For smaller employers and lower hiring volumes, returners can also be targeted on a 'supported hiring' basis for suitable open roles.

4. Offer tailored support

To set returners up for success, provide them with tailored support in the early months back. This could take the form of specialised Career Returners coaching, training, and an internal mentor and buddy. This support will help returner hires more rapidly rebuild their confidence and thrive back at work.

Case Study: The Aviva Returners Programme

Aviva has emerged as a leader in career returner hiring, offering structured programmes across investment and tech. The Aviva Tech and Change Delivery Returners Programme is a six-month paid placement designed for professionals with prior experience in tech or change delivery. Now in its fourth year, its success is evident in the 100% retention rate for participants who choose to stay.

Participants benefit from:

- Tailored Career Returners coaching and mentoring
- A dedicated leader, mentor, and buddy
- Flexible working arrangements
- Hands-on experience with meaningful projects

Chaitra Rajanna, DBA Security Engineer and 2024 returner, described the programme as "transformative, a perfect blend of skill building, confidence-boosting and reconnecting with the tech industry... not just a career restart, a leap forward."

Aviva's approach demonstrates how structured support, inclusive culture, and meaningful work can empower returners and deliver long-term value for employers. Returners contribute quickly, stay longer, and strengthen team culture. The programme also enhances Aviva's reputation as a forward-thinking, inclusive employer.

Making the Shift Now for the Future

FinTech prides itself on innovation. It's time now to innovate in hiring candidates with non-linear CVs. Career returners are not a compromise, they're a competitive advantage. By opening doors to this hidden talent pool, FinTech firms can strengthen their workforce, improve gender balance, and build teams ready for the future.

CAREER RETURNERS

Top predictions for small business banking in 2026

Eytan Bensoussan,
CEO & Co-Founder,
North One

Description: Learn Eytan Bensoussan's data-based predictions for what will define small business banking in the coming year, including even further AI adoption, instant payments, and near-instant digital onboarding.

The future of small business banking is happening right now with the adoption of AI tools by small business owners doubling in the last 24 months, instant payment rails seeing triple-digit growth, and digital onboarding becoming the expectation by small business owners. These are all meaningful shifts that are reshaping how businesses conduct their banking and how we operate at North One Business Banking. Legacy banks may have scale, but 2026 will reward speed; below are my four predictions for how small business banking will change in the next year.

1. Tech-first banks pull ahead with AI

According to Google Cloud's Financial Services report , 90% of financial services organisations running generative AI reported revenue gains of 6% or more. Banking institutions seriously investing in AI deployment at their firms, like North One, have already seen significant productivity and revenue gains, even with a lower headcount than legacy firms. With fewer built-out processes and a cumbersome network of stakeholders than large banks and credit, smaller firms have established rules of engagement for AI to ensure compliance, as well as data and security protections for clients, and jumped in to accomplish more with AI tools.

Prediction: From engineering new tools to expediting compliance processes to optimizing marketing efforts, AI will enable nimble and innovative firms to gain market share from larger business banking players in 2026.

2. AI-integrated banking eats more of the software world

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's recent national survey , 58% of small businesses now use AI, an increase from 23% in 2023. At North One, we've seen this Main Street adoption grow, with charges for AI tools by our small business customers increasing by 312% in just the last two years. While much of this use is concentrated in dedicated tools like ChatGPT for use in customer engagement or inventory management, more small business owners are utilising embedded tools in platforms like QuickBooks and Shopify. While banking is traditionally less technology-forward, an opportunity exists and is being seized upon by AI-first banks to integrate financial tools traditionally provided by third-party software tools for services like accounting, forecasting, and invoicing.

Prediction: AI will enable banks to provide financial tools and services previously provided by third parties, like accounts receivable and spend management, directly into their applications for the convenience of their customers. Direct integration of AI agents and the speed of engineering with AI will enable these developments.

"At North One, we've seen a 120% year-over-year increase in Real-Time Payments usage by our customers—a clear indication that the demand for instant money movement is no longer niche."

3. Real-time money movement becomes the default

At North One, we've seen a 120% year-over-year increase in Real-Time Payments usage by our customers—a clear indication that the demand for instant money movement is no longer niche. Instant payouts are quickly becoming a requirement rather than a nice-to-have as the FedNow Service quickly scales. In Q2 2025, the network settled 2.13 million payments totalling $245.8 billion, up 62.7% and 405.7% quarter-over-quarter, respectively, with an average ticket of $115k. These volumes reflect valuable use cases for businesses from last-minute, emergency payroll to account-verification flows.

Prediction: By 2026, business customers will expect instant payments and 24/7 posting for transactions, including payroll, refunds and payments from clients. This demand will pressure banks to modernise limits, fraud ops, and risk controls to accommodate the speed of these payments.

4. Digital-first onboarding is the default, but must be nearly frictionless

BAI's small business banking study shows nearly 70% of small businesses would prefer to open deposit accounts entirely online but the challenge of application inefficiencies persists. Many small businesses hit identity-verification hurdles, are rejected with little communication, or are forced to visit a bank branch to complete the application process. Despite this friction, the study shows that over half of business owners expect to use digital-first, self-service channels by 2027 over physical branches.

Prediction: In 2026, a key differentiator for business banking will be the speed of onboarding and removing extraneous inhibitors to sign up, as well as modernising fraud checks to keep out bad actors. When considering these predictions, 2026 will be a year in which execution speed becomes the primary determiner of success in business banking. Rapid iteration of new features with AI, instant money movement, and zero onboarding friction are expectations for small businesses seeking a banking provider. North One has leaned into these industry shifts to offer small business owners not just a bank account, but an operating system for their business finances.

North One

"That's to be expected": the four words that changed everything

Names have been changed to protect privacy.

Tom Sturge,
Co-Founder,
Unconventional Business

Less than six months into my role as Head of Technology, I sat in my first pay review meeting surrounded by executives who'd started the company years before. The spreadsheet on screen showed our engineers' compensation. That's when I saw it: Emma, our highest-performing senior engineer, was earning £15,000 less than James, whose performance consistently lagged behind hers.

"There must be a mistake," I said. The CFO barely glanced at the numbers before responding with practiced patience. "That's to be expected."

Four words. Delivered without shame, without hesitation. As if systematic gender pay discrimination was as natural as quarterly reports.

The Silence That Spoke Volumes

I looked around the table. The CEO who'd recruited me promising to "transform our engineering culture." My direct manager, the Chief Product Officer, who preached about high-performing teams. The HR Director whose email signature displayed pronouns and rainbow flags.

Nothing. Just knowing glances between people who'd had this conversation before.

"Expected by who?" I pressed. "Emma outperforms James in every measurable category. She works harder, grasps complex problems faster, provides insights that save months of development time."

The HR Director shuffled papers. "Historical compensation structures... market rates at time of hiring... various factors..."

Corporate word salad obscuring a simple truth: we were knowingly paying a woman less for superior work, and everyone accepted it as normal. This 16% gap wasn't unusual; it was industry standard.

The Newcomer's Dilemma

I was the newest department leader at the table. The smart move would've been noting my concern and revisiting once established. Pick my battles. Play the long game.

Emma didn't deserve to wait for the long game. Every month we delayed was institutionalised theft of her recognition, compensation, and the message that her work had equal value.

Her recent work was elegant, scalable, innovative. She'd voluntarily mentored other developers. She'd debugged critical issues outside her domain simply because the team needed help.

James? Competent but unremarkable. Doing exactly what's required, nothing more. Earning £15,000 more for being born with different chromosomes.

Challenging the Comfortable Consensus

"How can we sit here, look at objective performance data, and accept our best senior engineer is paid less than our average one?"

The CEO's expression shifted to warning. "Tom, you're new. These structures predate your arrival. We have processes for addressing compensation over time."

"Over time? How much time does equality take? How many women will leave for companies that pay fairly while we follow 'processes'?"

The uncomfortable truth: 60% of women in tech leave mid-career, with pay inequality driving much of that exodus. Emma wouldn't wait for bureaucratic processes to deliver fairness.

The CPO interjected: "We have budget constraints. We can't restructure compensation on a whim."

That word, whim. As if paying people fairly was some fleeting fancy rather than fundamental justice.

The Ultimatum

I realised this wasn't about budgets or processes. It was about comfort. The men around this table were comfortable with inequality because it cost them nothing.

"Here's what needs to happen," I said. "We're adjusting Emma's salary to match her peers. If there's no budget for equality, take it from my compensation. I'll forfeit my raise, bonus, whatever it takes."

Silence. They exchanged calculating glances. The CEO leaned back, ready to test my fortitude.

"If you feel that strongly, Tom, your year-end increase can fund the adjustment."

They tried to call my bluff. Except it wasn't a bluff.

The Price of Principles

They took every penny of my promised increase. My direct manager, the Chief Product Officer, even had the audacity to frame it as generous: "We're allowing you to redirect your increase. That's quite accommodating of your principles."

The word stung. They were treating equality like a personal indulgence I could purchase if I cared enough, rather than a fundamental requirement they'd failed to meet.

When I told Emma about her adjustment, I kept it simple. "I fought for this. You deserve it."

She thanked me, pleased. "I appreciate you going to bat for me."

I nodded. She didn't need to know "going to bat" meant literally paying for her equality myself. What those executives didn't understand: when you make someone personally sacrifice for equality, you don't discourage them. You change them fundamentally. You transform them from someone who sees injustice into someone who can't stand by anymore.

The Transformation Within

What emerged understood that allyship without action is just performance. Real change requires putting something meaningful on the line. The executives treated me like I'd broken sacred code but I'd found my voice.

In subsequent meetings, I questioned all-male shortlists.

Made inequality visible and uncomfortable for those benefiting from it. I'd witnessed how casually discrimination operated.

The male engineers had no idea their female colleague was systematically underpaid. They didn't see the system betraying people who gave the most effort and value. I couldn't unsee it anymore. Every overlooked contribution, every dismissal of diversity concerns became a call to action. Staying silent made me complicit.

Beyond Expected

This story isn't unique. In boardrooms everywhere, leaders are being told inequality is "to be expected." Women are systematically underpaid while male colleagues remain oblivious.

If you have influence over compensation decisions, you have a choice. Accept the comfortable consensus, or be the person who says "this is unacceptable" and means it.

"That's to be expected" should be your professional trigger phrase. Those words defending discrimination are an invitation to complicity. Your response defines whether you're maintaining the system or changing it.

The journey from bystander to accomplice happens the moment you stop averting your eyes and start paying the personal price for change. Every woman deserves leaders willing to pay that price with their own advancement if necessary.

That's not expected in corporate leadership. That's exactly why it's essential.

The 24x5' financial trading trend

As global markets become increasingly interconnected, the demand for 24x5 trading is intensifying. The ability to trade across time zones, particularly US equities during Asian business hours, has shifted from opportunistic advantage to strategic necessity. For firms, this means more than accessing overnight venues. It requires robust connectivity, rapid access to market data, and informed understanding of risks and rewards.

Partnering with Specialists

To capture the full benefits of extended trading hours, many firms turn to specialist partners. This delivers infrastructure too costly to replicate in-house and enables participation on emerging platforms such as MOON ATS, OTC Overnight and Bruce ATS - venues expanding 24x5 US equities access. For both institutional and retail participants, these platforms support flexible trading and new opportunities.

Partnership delivers expertise, technology and performance at a fraction of in-house cost. Space and connectivity can be leased as needed, ensuring firms remain compliant while adjusting capacity efficiently.

Beyond Extended Hours

Overnight sessions are not merely an extension of the traditional day. They allow firms to react to market-moving events outside regular trading times, from earnings announcements and policy shifts to geopolitical developments. For some firms, reduced competition during overnight sessions can create favourable pricing opportunities. However, thinner liquidity can increase volatility, so firms must balance opportunity with risk.

The Role of Managed Service Providers

Infrastructure is central to overnight trading, and achieving success requires more than venue access. Firms need powerful servers near exchange matching engines, high quality network connections and real-time data across venues. Trading success often hinges on ultra-low latency: links to liquidity pools measured in microseconds can mean the difference between profit and loss.

Managed Service Providers (MSPs) offer prime positions in major datacentres, flexible leasing of fully serviced equipment and integrated solutions from application management through to market data delivery.

In a market where uptime is critical and outages can cause reputational as well as financial damage, effective MSPs combine scalability, low-latency connectivity and dependable global market access. This helps firms to trade more efficiently, control costs and build resilience through layered redundancy, monitoring, and on-site support.

Rick Gilbody, Global Head of Sales & Marketing, Financial Markets, Transaction Network

TNS

A Strategy for Success

The firms that succeed in overnight markets are those that adopt a multi-faceted strategy. Critical factors include:

- Ultra-reliable connectivity to maintain uptime across time zones
- Low-latency market data feeds to support rapid decision-making
- Regulatory readiness to remain compliant with evolving market rules and oversight
- Scalable infrastructure that can grow with trading demand and new venue access

Success is not about technology alone. It requires combining infrastructure with expertise - blending specialized technology, robust connectivity, timely market data, and strong risk management.

The Future of 24x5

As more firms explore 24x5 trading, advantage will lie less in access itself and more in how effectively it is managed. The right partnerships provide efficient infrastructure and the flexibility to adapt as new venues emerge.

With global events moving markets across time zones, firms that can respond seamlessly will capture the most value. By combining specialist expertise, scalable infrastructure, and sound risk management, overnight trading becomes a strategic opportunity.

Belonging at work is everyone's business

'As Seen in Forbes'

Inclusion should include us all. But often, it doesn't. Some people believe inclusion has nothing to do with them. Others say it's not their job, as if inclusion is only for certain groups. Some even choose to step away from it entirely. But inclusion should not be a luxury in the workplace. It is essential for more people to feel they belong at work.

True leaders do more than deliver results. They create space for others to grow. Good leadership means helping every person thrive, regardless of who they are or what they need. Great leaders lift their teams. They support continuous learning through honest feedback and skills development. And they set the tone for everyone else.

Team members can follow that lead. They can choose to support each other and learn from one another. Or they can choose to doubt and undermine. That choice shapes the culture of a business and the ability of its people to be successful.

Inclusion is about building workplaces where people feel seen, valued and heard. Where every voice matters. Where no one has to shrink themselves to fit in. No one should hold back their ideas simply because they are in the minority.

If Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is being 'reinvented', then belonging must become the future of successful workplaces. That means inclusion must involve every one of us. We all have a role to play in helping our teams thrive because when people thrive, businesses do too.

At the 2025 event "Inclusion Includes you," these fintech leaders shared what inclusion means to them and how it drives both people and performance forward.

Belonging Goes Beyond Demographics

Creating a sense of belonging for all staff is key to meaningful equity and inclusion at work. Leaders must design and communicate workplace policies clearly from the start.

Eugénie Colonna d'Istria is an Investor at Finch Capital. She shared how inclusion efforts are often reduced to hiring targets for specific demographics. This is a strategy known as quotas. While quotas are a good starting point, they need proper support. She warns, "Quotas can help accelerate change, but without cultural shifts, they can cause doubt, resentment, and even exclusion."

If inclusion is a numbers game alone, people can have their accomplishments diminished. Others are more likely to undermine or question their

Nadia Edwards-Dashti, Co-Founder and Chief Customer Officer, Harrington Starr

worth. When teams welcome, encourage, and value diversity of thought, skillset, and career path, people start to feel they belong. This requires policies that are not just written, but lived and understood by everyone.

That also means redefining what leadership looks and sounds like. Eugenie explained, "There shouldn't be one mould for leadership. Assertiveness isn't masculinity. Performance isn't loudness. Leadership can and should look different."

Belonging Starts Sooner Than You Think

Leaders can miss out on including everyone in their team when their progression plans overlook these differences. Belonging doesn't exist without inclusion every day and over time. Oge Opara-Nadi is the VP of Engineering at Hey Savi. She says, "Succession planning starts too late." By the time you're choosing a future leader, the decision's already shaped by "recency bias."

Inclusive career progression means investing in your team early and fairly. It means spotting potential that doesn't always look like what has come before. It also requires recognising that people can share the same space, but bring very different life experiences.

"We may coexist in the same space," Oge said, "but our experiences are fundamentally different." Those differences should not be a challenge to manage, but instead, a strength to build from. They bring fresh perspectives, new ways of thinking, and creative solutions to complex problems. Successful teams are creating the conditions for those differences to be seen, respected, and heard.

Belonging And AI

It is our differences that prepare the workplace to evolve, adapt, and respond with agility. AI is a powerful example of this shift and is becoming part of every workplace. The fear of AI replacing jobs is starting to fade. Instead, people are now focused on making sure they are not replaced by someone using AI more effectively than they are.

Ashlea Atigolo is Managing Partner, Advisory Board member and Founder of multiple AI businesses. She is leading the call for better, more human-centred technology. She wants more from today's AI, and more from the people who create it. Her career is dedicated to building AI tools. She is passionate about including more voices in shaping what AI becomes. "If we expect AI to understand our finances, our health, our lives," she asked, "shouldn't we make sure it understands our humanity?"

Ashlea uses the example of when she tested an AI tool using the phrase: "I lost my job and I'm worried about money." The response was technically accurate and advised, "Rearrange your portfolio." The lack of empathy confirmed for her what was missing. AI will not become inclusive on its own. It learns from the people who build it. And those people must reflect the society they serve.

"We created AI. It's up to us to teach it empathy," Ashlea said. She connects this back to the workplace, reminding us that empathy must start with each other. "If we want empathy from our machines, we have to start showing it to each other."

The speakers at Harrington Starr's event, "Inclusion Includes YOU" in London 2025.

Belonging Means Conformity Shifts To Innovation

At work, whether at a desk, in a meeting, online or in person, everyone has experienced a moment when they choose not to speak up. Often, it feels safer not to challenge the room. Oge says, "that safety is an illusion." She encourages those she works with to "ask yourself, do we have enough diversity in the room to challenge our assumptions?" especially if everyone agrees too quickly.

Oge warns that 'groupthink' may feel comfortable, but it comes at a high cost. When everyone looks the same, thinks the same, or stays quiet out of fear, businesses end up creating products and cultures that only serve a limited part of society.

Lynda Clarke, Fintech COO, shares concrete examples of when this conformity has damaged businesses. She spoke of early health apps that ignored menstrual tracking, car safety tests designed for male crash dummies, and voice assistants that couldn't recognise women's voices. Each of these cases led to exclusion, public backlash, lost revenue and missed opportunity. "Blind spots hurt businesses," Lynda said. She called on leaders to prioritise genuine diversity of thought and to build environments where people feel safe enough to speak up. Without psychological safety, there can be no real inclusion. As Lynda explained, "People overestimate their own knowledge in a room and ignore others' perspectives." That creates an atmosphere where people begin to question their own value and stop sharing their ideas.

She went on to share a powerful example from Lego. For many years, the brand focused almost entirely on boys. When they brought in female product developers and marketers, they unlocked a massive, previously ignored audience: young girls. The result was the creation of "Lego Friends," now one of their global bestsellers. "We need to create cultures where challenge is welcomed, not punished," Lynda said. When people feel safe to speak, businesses grow stronger, smarter, and more inclusive.

Inclusion done right creates belonging. Belonging fuels performance, trust, and innovation. It encourages people to stay, to grow, and to contribute fully at work. When companies step into inclusion, they open the door for better ideas, stronger teams, and fairer workplaces. They create cultures where more people can thrive, not just a few who happen to fit the mould. The future of work demands more than surface-level diversity. It needs real cultural change, everyday allyship, and a shared commitment to belonging.

Because inclusion includes me.
Inclusion includes you.
And inclusion includes all of us.

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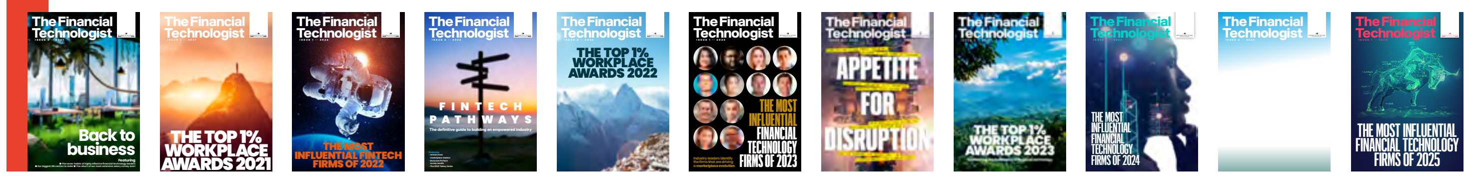

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