banking technology

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MONEY ON THE MIND
Neurodiversity and finance

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 PAYS
The challenge of cross-border payments

TRUST THE DATA
Connecting accurate data to stronger compliance

Produced by FINTECH FUTURES

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Tanya Andreasyan
Editor

Welcome to the November edition of *Banking Technology* – as always, packed with notable happenings over the last month, thought-provoking articles and insightful commentary.

Money20/20 USA dominated the fintech events world in late October, with 11,000 attendees from 85 countries descending on Las Vegas and 630+ speakers across more than 300 sessions over four days.

AI, as a major force reshaping financial services, unsurprisingly featured prominently on stage, with Wells Fargo, Starling Bank, Anthropic and Incode – among many others – unveiling AI-focused products and services. Ricardo Amper, CEO of Incode, highlighted the urgency of AI-powered security, noting that "crime is now operating at the speed of AI" where "the cost of fraud is trivial with deepfakes and impersonations".

Digital assets were another red-hot topic, headlined by Western Union's announcement of its USDPT stablecoin launch in 2026. Built on Solana and issued by Anchorage Digital Bank, the initiative will serve Western Union's 150 million customers across 200+ countries.

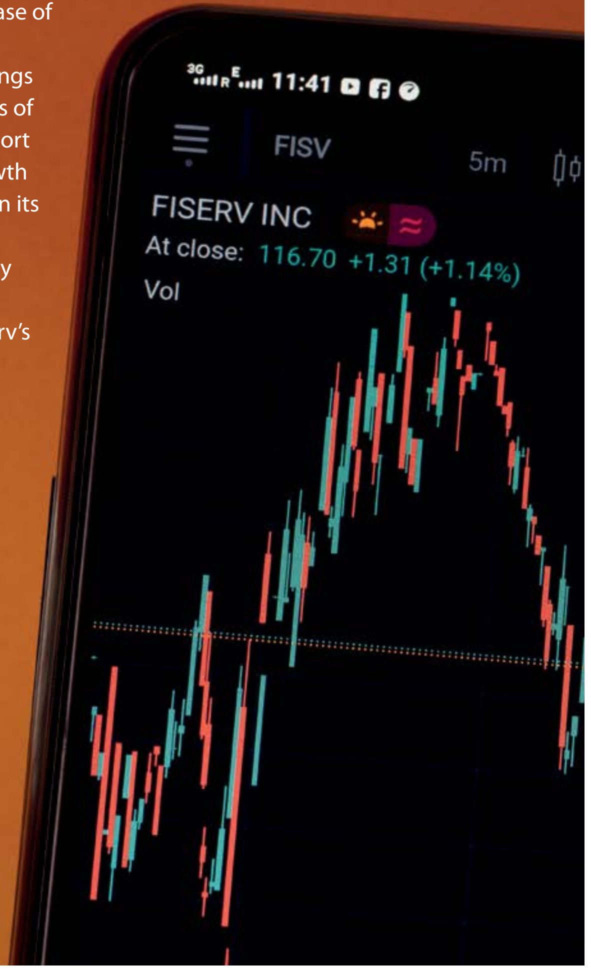
Among other highlights were all things IPO, including post-IPO communications strategies. "An IPO is an entrance, not an exit," stated one of the sessions.

The evolving relationship between privacy and personalisation in financial services was discussed, with conversations challenging the fundamental premise that privacy and personalisation are mutually exclusive. Head over to the dedicated content hub on the *FinTech Futures* website for more details on these themes and much more, brought to you by our editorial team straight from the show floor. Features, key takeaways, announcements, interviews, videos and podcasts – all in one place for your convenience, and all free.

What's next? We are looking forward to FinovateEurope on 10-11 February 2026 in London, kicking off the year with insights, connections and live demos that you won't see anywhere else!

NEWS ROUND-UP

Fiserv stock tumbles, announces leadership team shake-up



Fiserv experienced its worst trading day in the company's history on Wednesday 29 October, with its stock plummeting by more than 40% following the release of its Q3 2025 results.

The US banking and payments technology giant reported adjusted earnings per share of $2.04, down 11% year-over-year and below analyst expectations of around $2.65. Revenue increased modestly by 1% to $4.92 billion, but fell short of the $5.36 billion forecast. The fintech also slashed its annual revenue growth outlook to between 3.5% and 4%, down from a previous projection of 10% in its Q2 results.

During an earnings call, CEO Mike Lyons, who assumed the role in January 2025, attributed part of the financial underperformance to deteriorating economic conditions in Argentina. The country had contributed 10% of Fiserv's organic growth in the previous year.

Fiserv has also announced a raft of leadership changes. Takis Georgakopoulos, who joined as chief operating officer (COO) and head of technology and merchant solutions in April 2025, will become co-president effective 1 December 2025. Dhivya Suryadevara, currently CEO of Optum Financial Services and Optum Insight at UnitedHealth Group, has also been appointed co-president and will oversee financial solutions, sales and operations. Additionally, Paul Todd, former chief financial officer (CFO) of Global Payments and current venture partner at TTV Capital, has been appointed as CFO. He takes over from Robert Hau, who had led Fiserv's financial functions for nearly a decade.

The board of directors is also undergoing significant restructuring. Gordon Nixon, former CEO of Royal Bank of Canada, will become independent chairman, replacing Doyle Simons. BlackRock's Gary Shedlin will chair the audit committee, succeeding Kevin Warren, while former Checkout.com COO Céline Dufétel will also join the audit committee. These changes take effect on 1 January 2026, when the board will comprise 11 members.

UK launches initiative to accelerate financial services growth

UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves has unveiled plans for a new specialised "scale-up unit" designed to "provide dedicated resource for fast-growing firms seeking support as they expand", according to a statement from the Treasury.

The Treasury says support delivered by the new unit "will help banks, insurers and fintech firms expand faster, create well paid jobs and attract investment".

The new unit will initially focus on providing bespoke support for banks and insurers to navigate regulations. Its scope will then extend to support financial services firms across the sector, including the UK's 3,000-strong fintech community, from early next year.

Regulatory navigation has been identified as a major obstacle to business scaling. To tackle this challenge, the scale-up unit will operate under joint leadership from the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA).

This initiative represents part of the UK government's broader strategy to establish the country as the world's leading destination for financial firms by 2035 and builds on regulatory reforms introduced at the end of 2024, when Reeves outlined plans to create a "more dynamic" regulatory approach that enhances sector competitiveness. These include the integration of the Payment Systems Regulator (PSR) into the FCA, ending its status as an independent body and the introduction of an advanced draft legislation for cryptoasset regulation.

General Bank of Canada adopts Thought Machine's Vault Core

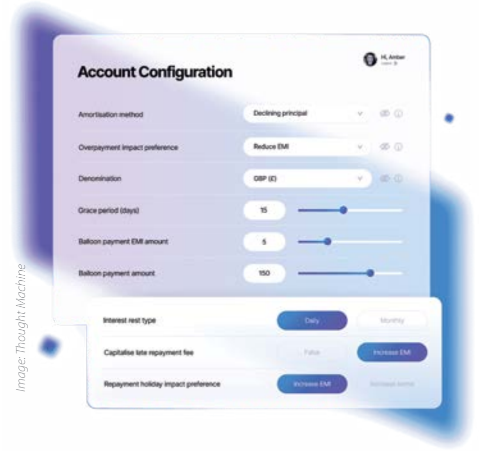


Image: Thought Machine

General Bank of Canada (GBC) has signed with London-based banking technology company Thought Machine to upgrade its core banking tech with the vendor's flagship Vault Core platform.

The deal will see GBC gradually migrate its core banking product development to Thought Machine's cloud-native Vault Core platform as part of the bank's "ambitious transformation strategy", the two companies say. (Check out the recent What the FinTech? podcast episode featuring the bank's chief risk officer Adam Ennamli for more details.)

The bank has been a long-standing client of Portfolio+, a domestic banking tech software provider, *FinTech Futures* understands.

The Vault Core platform, recently adopted by financial institutions including Zopa and Shawbrook and Afin in the UK, offers more than 200 preconfigured financial products. These range from traditional banking services such as credit cards, savings and loans to contemporary offerings such as buy now, pay later (BNPL) solutions, offset mortgages and digital wallets.

Launched in 2005, Alberta-based GBC has 100 employees and 325,000+ clients, providing them with auto loans, commercial lending, aviation financing and investment services.

UK banks unite with Shelter to help homeless people open accounts

Five major banks in the UK have partnered with housing charity Shelter to provide bank accounts to people experiencing homelessness. The pilot involves Lloyds Banking Group, NatWest, Barclays, Nationwide and Santander, and forms part of a new Financial Inclusion Strategy recently unveiled by the UK government.

According to a statement by the UK Treasury, this strategy aims to establish "a national plan to make financial services work for everyone, from people experiencing homelessness and survivors of abuse to families with no savings and children learning about money for the first time".

The initiative includes partnerships with credit agencies to restore affected consumer credit records, payroll savings schemes offered in partnership with employers and strengthened financial education in schools.

For their part, the new bank partners will waive the requirement for applicants to present a fixed home address when opening accounts, instead deriving the relevant user criteria from Shelter's verified database.

The UK government is also "backing the rollout of 350 new banking hubs by the end of this parliament" in 2029 (there are around 200 such hubs at present).

Lloyds Banking Group to launch AI financial assistant

Lloyds Banking Group in the UK has unveiled a new AI financial assistant tool, which it says will "provide 24/7 personalised financial coaching and work as a financial companion" for customers, with plans to launch in early 2026.

Lloyds describes the service as "a conversational tool that allows customers to request personalised spending insights". The bank says the feature retains prior inputs to "understand and respond to specific, hyper-personalised customer requests". Customers will also have access to an adjoining savings and investment tool that the bank says helps them "make informed financial decisions to plan for their financial futures".

Both features are built on the group's generative AI and agentic framework, using GenAI for conversational interfaces and agentic AI to process requests and execute actions. In preparation for a full-scale launch next year, Lloyds is currently beta testing the service among its workforce.

Following its initial pilot, the bank says the offering will "deepen the support it provides over time, with features covering spending, savings and investments". This includes efforts to "expand across the full suite of financial products offered by Lloyds in 2026 and beyond, from mortgages, to car finance, to protection needs".

The launch forms part of the bank's AI strategy led by Rohit Dhawan, who joined Lloyds from Amazon Web Services as director of AI and advanced analytics last year. Lloyds also partnered with Google Cloud to migrate its AI infrastructure to Vertex AI earlier this year and deployed its first large-scale generative AI product, Athena.

Tangerine Bank in core banking overhaul with Engine by Starling

Canadian digital bank Tangerine has signed a new 10-year core banking deal with Engine by Starling. Under the terms of the agreement, Tangerine will shift its core digital banking system to Engine's Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) banking platform.

The cloud-based platform will be used to deliver digital onboarding, current and savings accounts, overdrafts, debit cards and money management features, including various card controls and spending insights, through a front-end mobile app.

Tangerine was first created by Dutch banking group ING in 1997 and was originally known as ING Direct Canada. The unit was then sold to Scotiabank, one of the 'Big Five' banks in Canada, in 2012 for approximately $2.2 billion.

Rebranded two years after the deal closed, while previously running on FIS Profile, Tangerine now serves around two million people in Canada with online retail banking services, including credit cards, mortgages and investment tools.

The digital bank is the first North American client to be signed by Engine, which hired former Personetics president Jody Bhagat in September to lead a regional expansion of its SaaS suite, including office launches in New York and Toronto.

Sam Everington, a long-time Starling Group executive who helped to launch Engine in 2022 and now serves as the division's CEO, says the agreement with Tangerine is "the largest deal we have signed to date". Engine is also used by Salt Bank in Romania and AMP Bank GO in Australia.

Mambu targets US credit unions with "composable banking"

Image: Mambu

Amsterdam-based core banking software provider Mambu is looking to break into the US credit union market with its flagship "composable banking" solution.

The offering is a cloud-native core banking system, delivered on a hosted, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) basis. Mambu describes it as "the world's only true SaaS cloud banking platform".

It is a modular product that supports core banking, deposits, lending and payments, and its composable approach allows independent components, systems and connectors to be assembled in a broad variety of configurations, depending on customer needs and requirements.

Since its inception in 2011, Mambu has amassed a client base of 260+ customers in more than 65 countries, comprising banks, credit unions, building societies, lenders, microfinance institutions, money operators and fintechs.

It already has a presence in North America with Canada-based League Data, a cooperative tech provider that supports 37 member credit unions across the country's Atlantic provinces (together, they operate 130 branches and service 320,000 customers). League Data swapped its old core banking system for Mambu's offering on Amazon Web Services (AWS).

On a broader geographical scale, Mambu has around 40 credit unions on its global customer list. It is now seeing a shift away from legacy tech in the US credit union space and hopes to capitalise on this trend.

Amber Harsin, who was hired last year as Mambu's VP, credit unions, observes that "credit unions are under immense pressure to keep pace with member expectations, all while operating on legacy systems that many feel hold them back".

Harsin previously spent a decade at CUProdigy, a US-based core processing platform for credit unions, most recently as its CEO. CUProdigy was acquired by another credit union-focused solutions provider, Blossom, last year.

She adds: "Composability is not a strategy of patching or layering complexity onto legacy systems to force integration; it's about forging a clean, digital-first foundation."

For a healthy dose of daily news on all things banking, fintech and payments head over to the FinTech Futures online news section.

FINTECH FEED

THE NUMBER GAMES

To read more about any of these stories, visit *www.fintechfutures.com/type/news*

$7.2 billion

is the latest valuation of Toronto-headquartered money management firm Wealthsimple, following its $538 million equity funding round; the round was co-led by Dragoneer Investment Group and GIC, with participation from previous backers ICONIQ, IGM Financial, Greylock and Meritech, and Power Corporation of Canada, alongside new investor CPP Investments

£850 million

is the valuation of the Post Trade Solutions business of the London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG), as LSEG has agreed to sell a 20% stake in it to a cohort of global banks for £170 million; the business provides risk management and optimisation services to the uncleared derivatives market, including LSEG's Acadia, Quantile, SwapAgent and TradeAgent businesses, and generated £96 million in revenue last year

$2.9 billion

to be paid by Japanese technology company NEC Corporation for CSG Systems International, a long-standing specialist in customer engagement, revenue management and payment SaaS solutions for the telecom, financial services and healthcare industries in the US; once the acquisition closes, SCG will become a wholly-owned division of NEC through a reverse triangular merger, and will be used to build out the group's existing US subsidiary, Netcracker

$375 million

paid in cash and stock by US crypto exchange Coinbase for Echo, an on-chain private investment platform; Echo operates a platform that allows angels to invest in crypto projects alongside lead investors, with all transactions happening on blockchain using USDC; in addition, Echo has developed a self-hosting tool called Sonar, which allows project founders to run their own independent public token sales

$1 billion

paid by digital asset infrastructure provider Ripple for treasury management specialist GTreasury; in operation since 1986, Chicago-based GTreasury's software supports liquidity management, cash forecasting, payments, netting and risk management; it processes about $12.5 trillion in payment volume annually and had been majority owned by London-listed HgCapital Trust since 2023; this is Ripple's fourth major acquisition this year, having bought prime brokerage company Hidden Road, payment infrastructure fintech Rail and digital asset wallet solutions provider Palisade

$800 million

is the price tag of Delaware-based consumer loans fintech Best Egg, to be purchased by Barclays US Consumer Bank; founded in 2013, Best Egg is expected to facilitate more than $7 billion in personal loan originations in 2025

THEY SAID IT…

"The UAE has the second highest proportion of ultra-high-net-worth individuals (those who have amassed a fortune of $30 million or more) in the MENA region.

"There are an estimated 810 individuals with this level of wealth, controlling $120 billion between them, making Dubai a fertile destination for those seeking business capital."

Invest in Dubai, a government portal

• Read the full article about Dubai's drive to become a fintech powerhouse on the *FinTech Futures* website here

EDITOR'S CHOICE

TRENDING

Saudi Central Bank makes it EZ for challenger

The Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) has granted regulatory approval for EZ Bank to operate as a digital banking institution in the Kingdom. The new challenger represents a joint venture between Qatar National Bank (QNB) and Ajlan and Bros Holding, a Saudi conglomerate managing more than 75 companies globally.

QNB says the new digital bank will deploy "mobile-first platforms, AI-driven tools and smart risk management to make transactions easier, increase access, and support digital economy".

EZ Bank will focus on delivering a "digital-first banking experience that is simple, inclusive and secure, and to provide innovative solutions for the youth and entrepreneurs". The challenger will commence operations with SAR 2.5 billion (about $667 million) in capital.

EZ Bank's approval brings Saudi Arabia's total licensed banks to 39, comprising 24 foreign branches and 15 domestic institutions. This follows SAMA's earlier approval of STC Bank, the digital banking arm of Saudi Telecom Company, which received authorisation to provide digital banking services in February.

Beyond Saudi Arabia, EZ Bank recently secured licensing approval from Egypt's Central Bank, readying the institution for broader regional operations.

Erebor duo reach the summit with conditional OCC charter approval

The US Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) has conditionally approved the de novo national bank charter application for Erebor Bank, the latest joint venture between technology entrepreneurs Palmer Luckey and Joe Lonsdale built for businesses working in the digital asset and virtual currency space.

Luckey previously co-founded both Meta research unit Reality Labs – formerly Oculus VR – and military technology provider Anduril Industries, while Lonsdale is among the team behind data analytics company Palantir Technologies and serves as head of venture capital firm 8VC.

Based in Columbus, Ohio, Erebor Bank first applied for the national bank charter four months ago and is the first de novo bank to receive a preliminary conditional approval since Jonathan Gould stepped in to lead the OCC in July.

The official conditional charter approval letter from the OCC says Erebor Bank will operate as "a full service insured national bank that plans to target its products and services to technology companies and ultra-high-net-worth individuals that utilise virtual currencies".

According to the letter, the bank plans to offer "a variety of lending and deposit products and other related services".

The OCC says Erebor Bank must meet several requirements before gaining final approval. These include maintaining a minimum 12% Tier 1 Leverage ratio for the first three years, engaging an independent external auditor and passing a pre-opening examination.

Erebor Bank's current backers include Peter Thiel's Founders Fund and crypto-focused VC firm Haun Ventures, with the venture reported to have so far received $275 million in total financial backing.

In a statement on the conditional approval, Gould comments: "I am committed to a dynamic and diverse federal banking system, and our decision today is a first but important step in living up to that commitment.

"Today's decision is also proof that the OCC under my leadership does not impose blanket barriers to banks that want to engage in digital asset activities," Gould continues. "Permissible digital asset activities, like any other legally permissible banking activity, have a place in the federal banking system if conducted in a safe and sound manner."

Gould adds that the regulator will "continue to provide a path for innovative approaches to financial services to ensure a strong, diverse financial system that remains relevant over time".

Revolut ready to guac and roll in Mexico

Digital banking challenger Revolut has secured final authorisation from the National Banking and Securities Commission (CNBV) to launch operations as a multiple banking institution in Mexico.

Revolut has been preparing for a full-scale launch in the country for over four years, having first hired former RappiPay executive Juan Miguel Guerra to head its entry into Mexico in 2021. The following year, it landed a money transmitter licence from the regulator.

Now, with the "the last regulatory step required before opening the bank's doors to the public" secured, Revolut plans to offer a broad range of financial services to the public as a fully-fledged bank. This includes deposit protection of up to MXN 3.4 million (about $184,530).

Revolut says it "continues to invest heavily in the market" and is "actively hiring across levels and functions" in preparation for the launch of its services.

This expansion into Mexico is part of its ongoing international growth strategy – a £10 billion commitment to increase its retail customer base to 100 million globally by mid-2027 and enter more than 30 new markets by 2030.

In Latin America, Revolut is also pursuing a full banking licence in Colombia and is in the process of acquiring a bank in Argentina, having previously debuted in Brazil in 2023.

For more stories on new banks and approvals, head over to the FinTech Futures website.

Building digital trust: Data quality provides a scalable path

Melissa's chief information officer Bud Walker sets out seven steps that connect accurate data to stronger compliance, safer onboarding and lasting trust

Financial services now run as much on trust as they do on capital. Customers hand over their identities, their transactions and their financial future to institutions they may never visit in person.

Regulators, meanwhile, expect airtight controls that keep fraud out and maintain market integrity without grinding day-to-day banking to a halt. In that tension between safety and speed, 'digital trust' has emerged as the new currency.

The need for trust is urgent. Fraud, synthetic identities, breaches and bot-driven account takeovers have eroded confidence, unfortunately at the exact moment customers demand seamless experiences with their digital bankers. Too often, the institutional response is to bolt on another point tool or tighten manual reviews. Those reactions can blunt a single threat, but they rarely build trust end-to-end. That requires a data-quality-first approach that strengthens every downstream control, from electronic identity verification (eIDV) and Know Your Business (KYB) to sanctions screening, analytics and AI.

What follows is a pragmatic, step-by-step path to digital trust, paired with a look at why each stage matters. The intent is not to sell a silver bullet, but to offer a sequence you can start now, prove quickly and scale deliberately.

1 NAME THE TRUST GAPS WHERE THEY LIVE

Before fixing workflows, inventory where trust fails. Look at drop-off during onboarding, the rate of false positives in sanctions or PEP (politically exposed persons) screening, and the back-and-forth that forces legitimate customers into manual review. Examine how often addresses, names, emails and phone numbers can't be confidently linked to a single, real person or business record. These are not minor hygiene issues. They are fault lines where synthetic identities slip through and good customers lose patience. Framing them as trust gaps (and not just 'ops pain') helps unify risk, compliance, fraud and CX around a single objective: make the right decision, quickly, using evidence that customers and auditors can both understand.

2 ESTABLISH THE DATA FOUNDATION AT THE FIRST TOUCH

Trust begins the moment a prospect types a name or scans a document. Don't settle for checks that merely confirm an address exists; bind that address, name, phone and email to the individual or business claiming them. Parsing, standardising and verifying contact data at the point of capture prevents propagation of subtle mismatches such as nicknames, diacritics, transpositions or recycled phone numbers. When the record is correct and complete up front, eIDV becomes proof, not guesswork. KYB becomes due diligence, not database triangulation. And the customer feels it, with sign-up flows that are shorter and approvals that are faster because the data is already trustworthy.

3 LAYER IDENTITY PROOF, DON'T PILE ON FRICTION

With clean, linked contact data in place, add evidence in ways that reinforce the same truth rather than spawning conflicting signals. Document authentication should extract and reconcile address and identity fields against verified sources. Geolocation should corroborate, not contradict, what's declared. Device and liveness checks should confirm that a real person is present without derailing a legitimate session. The aim is coherence, based on multiple, independent signals landing on the same identity. When those signals align because the underlying data is accurate, fraud controls become both stronger and less intrusive.

4 EXTEND TRUST TO COUNTERPARTIES WITH KYB

If KYC ensures you know the *individual*, KYB ensures you know the entity behind the account, card, payout or platform access. Here, data quality again separates confidence from confusion. Standardise legal names, resolve 'doing business as' aliases, confirm registration status, map ownership, and ensure addresses and principals actually tie back to the entity on file. Tight KYB doesn't just satisfy regulators. It reduces onboarding cycles for legitimate businesses, reveals shell structures before funds are moved, and gives relationship managers a high-reliability view of the customer they're betting on. With sanctions, PEP and adverse-media screening operations based on verified inputs, noise falls away and true risk stands out.

5 MAKE TRUST CONTINUOUS, NOT A ONE-TIME CHECK

Fraud patterns morph, people move, businesses change hands and watchlists update daily. A trustworthy program treats identity as a living object. That means refreshing key attributes on a cadence that matches risk. Optimised systems pay attention to signals that suggest drift, such as undeliverable mail, phone deactivations or email bounces, and further trigger targeted reverification before drift becomes loss. Sharpen matching logic by using outcomes from chargebacks, disputes and investigations as feedback. The addition of AI heightens both the payoff and the risk in these workflows. With trustworthy data, models find patterns that protect customers and portfolios, but with corrupted inputs, they confidently make the wrong call.

> "Institutions that build on trusted data reduce fraud without punishing good customers, prove compliance without paralysing operations, and deploy analytics and AI that truly reflect the world they model."
>
> **Bud Walker, Melissa**

6 PROVE IT BY MEASURING TRUST LIKE A P&L

Financial institutions can track onboarding completion time alongside approval rates or measure synthetic-identity interdiction and downstream fraud loss. They can quantify sanctions false-positive clearance time or monitor the share of customers forced into manual review. When data quality is working, financial institutions will see distinct indicators like fewer false positives, faster good-customer throughput, earlier detection of bad actors and lower unit costs in compliance. Publish these results internally and, where appropriate, with oversight teams. Trust grows when stakeholders can see (and audit) the same numbers.

7 START WHERE TRUST IS MOST AT RISK, THEN EXPAND

Digital trust is not a big-bang project. Begin where the stakes and friction are highest, such as a specific onboarding flow, or a specific product with elevated loss or compliance burden. Follow the steps above to establish the data quality foundation and compare before-and-after outcomes. Then extend the pattern to adjacent use cases that might feature high-risk geographies, remote account recovery, instant payouts or marketplace seller onboarding. Each expansion is faster than the last because the workflow foundation already exists and provides a consistent way to keep identity data accurate, linked and current.

The payoff is worth it. Institutions that build on trusted data reduce fraud without punishing good customers, prove compliance without paralysing operations, and deploy analytics and AI that truly reflect the world they model. They become the rare kind of financial brand that feels both safe and effortless. This is exactly what customers hope for and what regulators intend.

Modernisation under pressure: Which cake are you?

By Leda Glyptis

Do you remember your first bank account?

I was walking down memory lane with Temenos' Will Moroney last week. We were talking about the change we've lived through, as consumers as well as professionals. The change we have seen and the change yet to come.

Will was reminiscing that he was the first person in his household to get an ATM card in 1983.

As consumers, neither he nor I knew at the time what depth of transformation the ATM required… and triggered. I definitely didn't know, anyway.

And neither did I know (or, frankly, care) at the time that the existence of an ATM doesn't just mean that I can get cash for a kebab at 2am… it also means that the bank is now, for all intents and purposes, 'open' after 4pm. And the systems to allow for that to be the case needed to be built, and that was no small thing.

And then the internet came.

And, despite the ups and downs of the dot-com bubble, the world as we know it changed. And I, for one, was still not losing sleep over the pressure point this change created for banking. Not yet.

But I can appreciate it now. The pressure. Imagine, young readers, before the mid-90s, balances didn't need to be up to date in real-time because nobody could see them. Now clients can and will check their bank balance at 2am. While waiting for that kebab.

Before the advent of the internet, things still needed to be correct, obviously. Accounted for and reported appropriately. But you, as a banker, had more time. You could miss a cut-off and still have time to catch up overnight or correct something over the weekend.

Now? Now everyone could be looking at any one time. There is no flex. There is no lag. It's relentless.

"Only nobody was checking their balance at 2am in 2002," chuckles Will. "We had better things to do back then!"

But the fact that we *could* transformed the systems required in the background.

And that wasn't the end, of course. Because with the advent of the smartphone, we could be waiting for that kebab at 2am and checking whether our salary has been paid into our account… because it is after midnight and it is now payday… and we will check 20 times while eating that kebab… and keep checking till we see the updated balance… rightly convinced that the thing will refresh and update in real time with every ping… meanwhile oblivious to what it takes for that to happen: how many systems and 'handshakes'… and how expensive this little refresh game may be if you haven't designed that part of the journey properly.

And just you wait till the 'refresh' is done maniacally by an 'always on' AI agent.

Because we are at the start of yet

> "This is not our first pressure point, and it won't be the last, and the question is always the same: how do we harness the opportunity while managing risk?"
>
> **Leda Glyptis**

another cycle, aren't we? And although we can all see this, Will points out that… we've been here before. This is not our first hype cycle. Not by a long shot.

And each time, at the start of each new cycle, it's often hard to distinguish hype from opportunity. Some banks will get it right but, let's face it, many will hesitate. Others will spend big, in a wasteful way: spending money on things they are not ready or prepared to use.

The industry has done it before.

The industry is doing it again.

This is not our first pressure point, and it won't be the last, and the question is always the same: how do we harness the opportunity while managing risk?

That's the exam question.

That has always been the exam question.

Only this time, as Will says (and he's right), *everyone* is watching: employees, customers, shareholders. They are all watching and they all want slightly different things. Employees want to feel secure that we are navigating this changing world sensibly. Clients want a competitive offering competitively priced. And shareholders want returns.

And decision-makers inside banks are decades into a modernisation journey that will seemingly never end.

And the pressure is mounting.

And the stakes are ever higher.

And when I asked Will how his clients are coping with all this, the answer was very thoughtful but also very clear. Those with less legacy are actually able to move faster, so smaller banks may actually be able to navigate this more easily, despite smaller budgets. But everyone, no matter their size, is looking at risk and cost and trying to work out where to start because… where do you start dealing with something that will impact every single thing we are doing across the industry?

"Remember the fruitcake," said Will, referring to a short video I captured with his colleague Mick at Sibos in Frankfurt. Mick described the perfect AI deploying as the currants in a fruitcake: AI can't be a single, standalone thing you do over there. It has to be imbued in everything you do, or you are just playing. He didn't say that part. I am saying that.

So what does *your* fruitcake look like, Will?

Some of the fruit in the cake is around accelerated development, testing, documentation. Some is also around helping with the understanding of legacy software, when moving clients away from the past and into the future. "*This* is our gig," says Will. "And we use AI to help us do it better."

WHICH CAKE ARE YOU?

This really resonates with me.

Not to overuse the cake analogy, but what I think Will is essentially saying is whatever you decide to do with AI can't be a new cake. You have to be clear what cake you are making. What your cake is. What cake you are.

I may have taken the cake thing as far as it will go, but you know what I mean.

AI can't be a thing on top or to the side.

Not just because those things never move the needle (though, also that), but because… everyone is watching, remember? So whatever you do will have to demonstrate early impact and it will have to have material ROI. At the same time.

Because there will be sceptics pulling you to do more and sceptics pulling you to do less and meanwhile… *everyone*, sceptics and not, are watching.

> "Focus on your cake, your business, your mission. Be clear what it is. And make sure everything you do is supportive of that purpose. Everything else is noise."
>
> **Leda Glyptis**

And the regulation is still emerging, so complexity is only going to go up.

Because the regulation will need us to think about things differently. Will got me thinking here because, he is right, we may see regulation not just restricting which data we can leverage, but also saying you can't take the data as gospel.

Think about it. *He's right*. It is a given that we need to be responsible, especially in our regulated industry. But what being responsible entails is an emerging picture. As is what your organisation looks like once you've started really engaging with these capabilities.

And let's call it. Playing with GenAI isn't quite the same as using it for real. In your core business. In the cake, as such. Where it matters. And I say this with all the passion of a former chief innovation officer. There was a time for that. And that time is past.

Now we need things in the main cake, so to speak.

"We use AI in the completion of our mission," says Will. "And not just because everyone is expecting it."

The hype cycle is what it is. But hype fatigue doesn't make this less important. Whether we are tired, excited or indifferent, this isn't going anywhere. And whatever comes next… the next hype cycle… the next transformation inflection… the next pressure point… will be additive. And faster.

Will you be ready?

Don't answer that.

You won't be. Of course you won't be. Nobody is ever ready for the next thing.

But some people will be better able to cope, adapt, adjust.

Do you know who these people are, my tribe?

Of course you do. It's a trick question. The answer is the same one we give in this column, week in and week out. I just wanted to see if you are paying attention.

The only way to do well in a changing world is to focus and eschew distractions.

Focus on your cake, your business, your mission. Be clear what it is. And make sure everything you do is supportive of that purpose. Everything else is noise.

So do less. Do it better.

And partner as much as possible. With people who do less and do it better.

Because this cycle isn't the end. There's more where this came from, and the only way we can prepare for it is to expect it.

Then, and only then, can we have cake.

#LedaWrites

Leda Glyptis is *FinTech Futures'* resident thought provocateur – she leads, writes on, lives and breathes transformation and digital disruption. She is a recovering banker, lapsed academic and long-term resident of the banking ecosystem. She is also a published author – her first book, *Bankers Like Us: Dispatches from an Industry in Transition*, is available to order now.

All opinions are her own. You can't have them – but you are welcome to debate and comment!

Follow Leda on X (@LedaGlyptis) and LinkedIn (Leda Glyptis PhD). Visit our website for more of her articles.

Cross-border payments: Challenges and best practice

As businesses continue to expand globally, cross-border payments will remain a critical area of focus

Cross-border payments are no longer a niche area of financial operations. Rather, they are a critical enabler of international trade and economic growth.

Businesses of all sizes, from multinational corporations to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), are engaging in cross-border transactions to source goods, pay suppliers and expand into new markets.

While the growth of cross-border payments has been exponential, outpacing domestic payment growth, this area remains fraught with challenges. From FX volatility to operational inefficiencies, businesses often encounter complexities that can hinder their ability to operate efficiently.

However, with the right strategies and innovative solutions, companies can overcome these barriers and unlock the full potential of cross-border payments.

RAPID GROWTH

The global payments landscape is undergoing a massive transformation. Grandview Research forecasts that the global cross-border payments market will increase revenue from $212.55 billion in 2024 to $320.73 billion by 2030, representing a CAGR of 7.1% (2025 to 2030).

This steady growth reflects increasing demand for faster, cheaper and more transparent payment systems, driven by innovations such as ISO 20022

> "In 2024, cross-border payments reached $194.6 trillion in total volume."

messaging standards and real-time payment connectivity.

Transaction volumes tell an even bigger story. According to FXC Intelligence, in 2024, cross-border payments reached $194.6 trillion in total volume and non-wholesale payments made up $39.9 trillion of this amount. Among these, business-to-business (B2B) payments dominate, representing a total addressable market (TAM) of $31.6 trillion. This includes $17.8 trillion in large enterprise goods and services and $13.8 trillion in goods and services for small and medium-sized businesses. These figures illustrate the scale of cross-border payments and their critical role in enabling global trade.

THE CHALLENGES

Cross-border payments differ fundamentally from domestic payments, introducing layers of complexity that many businesses are unprepared for. These challenges can be grouped into three main categories:

1. Operational challenges

- **Inefficiencies in payment processes:** In the US, making a payment often only necessitates (1) a bank identifier and (2) an account number. In comparison, cross-border payments require other classifications such as FX rates. Missing information, including purpose-of-payment codes or incorrect account details, can lead to rejections or delays.
- **Low straight-through processing (STP) rates:** For FX, the rate of B2B payments achieved through STP is just 26%, according to a LexisNexis report. Challenges like a lack of standardisation across countries, incomplete data and compliance requirements contribute to these low rates, creating inefficiencies and increasing costs.

2. Financial challenges

- **Treasury inefficiencies:** One method that businesses have used to meet their cross-border payment needs is to open local bank accounts in the areas where they conduct business. While this approach allows for local currency transactions, it creates significant overhead. Treasury teams must reconcile and fund multiple accounts, often holding balances in currencies with low or negative yields. This model becomes unsustainable as businesses expand into multiple markets.

3. Transparency challenges

- **Lack of payment traceability:** One of the most significant pain points for businesses is the lack of visibility into the status of cross-border payments. Unlike domestic payments, where timelines are predictable, international transactions often leave businesses in the dark. For example, a delayed payment to a supplier can strain relationships and disrupt supply chains.
- **Hidden costs in dollar invoicing:** Many businesses mistakenly assume that invoicing and paying in US dollars eliminates FX risk. However, overseas suppliers often inflate their invoice

> "Cross-border payments differ fundamentally from domestic payments, introducing layers of complexity that many businesses are unprepared for."

amounts to protect against FX volatility. For instance, a German supplier might inflate a $2,000 invoice to $2,100 to protect the euro value against potential currency fluctuations over the 30-day invoice period. Another issue can occur on the supplier side when their bank will perform the USD to EUR conversion. In this case, they will receive an unpredictable amount of euros that they will then need to reconcile on their side. These hidden costs can ultimately add up.

BEST PRACTICES

To navigate these challenges, businesses can adhere to several best practices to optimise their cross-border payment processes:

1. Evaluate payables and receivables holistically

Businesses should assess whether they have both payables and receivables in a given market. For instance, if a US-based company pays suppliers in euros but does not generate revenue in euros, opening a local bank account may not be cost-effective. Instead, they can centralise their cash in their functional currency (for example, USD) and leverage solutions that provide access to local payment rails without the need for additional accounts.

2. Negotiate in local currency

By obtaining dual currency invoices, businesses can compare costs and make informed decisions. This approach not only reduces costs but also strengthens supplier relationships by providing clarity and predictability.

3. Future-proof treasury infrastructure

As businesses upgrade their ERP or TMS systems, they should include FX payment use cases in their scope. This ensures that their infrastructure can handle new currencies and payment types efficiently, enabling them to respond quickly to changing business needs. Automation tools can further streamline processes, reducing manual errors and improving efficiency.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

The financial services industry is evolving to address the challenges of cross-border payments, with banks and fintechs introducing innovative solutions to simplify the process. For example, in its soon-to-be-launched FX offering, RBC Clear will transform the cross-border payment experience with several key features:

1. Streamlined workflows

RBC Clear makes cross-border transactions almost as seamless as domestic ones. Clients can use the same file formats, reporting structures and workflows for both types of transactions, eliminating the need for separate processes or opening additional accounts

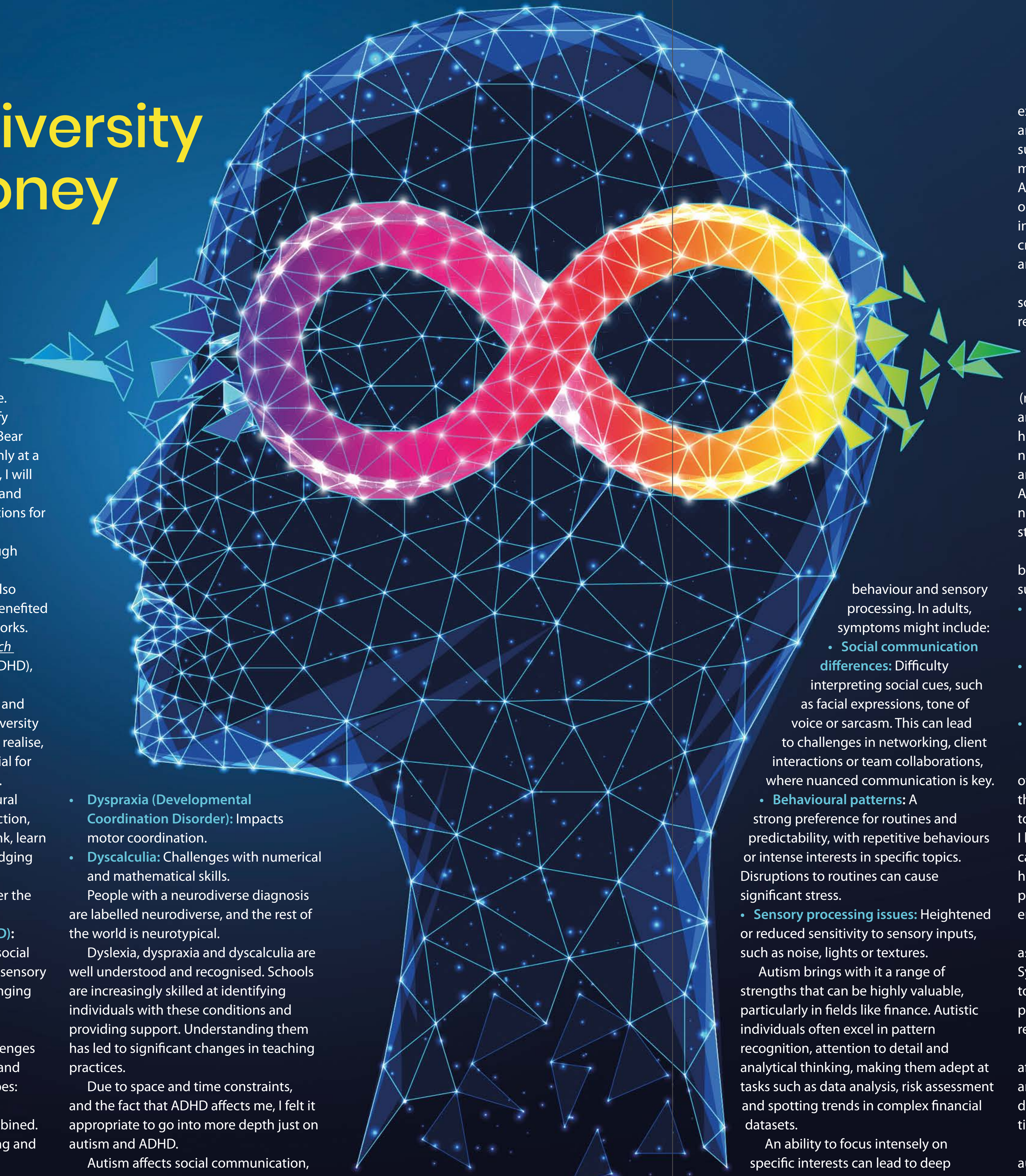
2. Proactive error prevention

To reduce payment rejections, RBC Clear provides upfront visibility into payment requirements. For example, clients are informed of mandatory information, such as purpose-of-payment codes, before initiating a transaction.

3. Enhanced payment traceability

RBC Clear provides traceability of payments, from initiation to beneficiary receipt. This transparency reduces anxiety for businesses and allows them to relay accurate information to suppliers, improving relationships and trust.

As businesses continue to expand globally, cross-border payments will remain a critical area of focus. By adopting best practices and leveraging advanced solutions, companies can optimise costs, strengthen supplier relationships and position themselves for success in an increasingly interconnected world.



Neurodiversity and money

By Dave Wallace

Neurodiversity is much more prevalent than many realise, and understanding it is crucial for high-stakes sectors such as finance.

This article attempts to demystify neurodiversity, ADHD and autism. Bear with me. I do discuss money, but only at a very general level. In future articles, I will delve into more detailed thoughts and insights from others about implications for the finance sector.

I want to say upfront that although there are many challenges for neurodivergent people, there are also many positives. I have personally benefited massively from the way my brain works.

In my recent article on the *FinTech Futures* website (Me, money, and ADHD), I shared my personal journey with ADHD, highlighting the challenges and misconceptions I've faced. Neurodiversity is much more prevalent than many realise, and I think understanding it is crucial for high-stakes sectors such as finance.

Neurodiversity refers to the natural variation in how human brains function, encompassing how individuals think, learn and interact with others, acknowledging diversity in cognitive approaches.

Common diagnoses falling under the neurodiversity umbrella include:

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):** Characterised by differences in social communication, behaviour and sensory processing, with experiences ranging from mild to significant.
- **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):** Involves challenges with attention, impulse control and activity levels, with three subtypes: inattentive (often called ADD), hyperactive-impulsive, and combined.
- **Dyslexia:** Difficulties with reading and language-related skills.
- **Dyspraxia (Developmental Coordination Disorder):** Impacts motor coordination.
- **Dyscalculia:** Challenges with numerical and mathematical skills.

People with a neurodiverse diagnosis are labelled neurodiverse, and the rest of the world is neurotypical.

Dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia are well understood and recognised. Schools are increasingly skilled at identifying individuals with these conditions and providing support. Understanding them has led to significant changes in teaching practices.

Due to space and time constraints, and the fact that ADHD affects me, I felt it appropriate to go into more depth just on autism and ADHD.

Autism affects social communication, behaviour and sensory processing. In adults, symptoms might include:

- **Social communication differences:** Difficulty interpreting social cues, such as facial expressions, tone of voice or sarcasm. This can lead to challenges in networking, client interactions or team collaborations, where nuanced communication is key.
- **Behavioural patterns:** A strong preference for routines and predictability, with repetitive behaviours or intense interests in specific topics. Disruptions to routines can cause significant stress.
- **Sensory processing issues:** Heightened or reduced sensitivity to sensory inputs, such as noise, lights or textures.

Autism brings with it a range of strengths that can be highly valuable, particularly in fields like finance. Autistic individuals often excel in pattern recognition, attention to detail and analytical thinking, making them adept at tasks such as data analysis, risk assessment and spotting trends in complex financial datasets.

An ability to focus intensely on specific interests can lead to deep expertise, while preference for structure and consistency is ideal for departments such as compliance or auditing where meticulous attention to detail is a must. Additionally, many autistic people think outside conventional frameworks, offering innovative perspectives that can drive creative solutions in fintech development and problem-solving.

I initially misunderstood ADHD as solely hyperactivity. My own diagnosis revealed a broader reality: ADHD is rooted in differences in neuro-processing, particularly dopamine regulation. Medications like Ritalin (methylphenidate) or Adderall (an amphetamine-based stimulant) can help by increasing dopamine and norepinephrine, calming the brain and enhancing focus for those with ADHD, unlike their stimulating effect on neurotypical individuals. But I should stress, they do not work for everybody.

ADHD involves differences in executive brain functions. Adult symptoms across subtypes include:

- **Inattentive type:** Trouble sustaining focus, forgetfulness, disorganisation and procrastination.
- **Hyperactive-impulsive type:** Restlessness, difficulty sitting still, impulsivity and interrupting others.
- **Combined type:** A mix of the above, often the most common in adults.

Individuals with inattentive ADHD often exhibit creativity and divergent thinking, generating innovative solutions to complex problems. This is something I have greatly benefited from in my career. Hyperactivity can translate into high energy and enthusiasm, driving productivity in fast-paced roles like client engagement.

But ADHD in adults is sometimes associated with broader challenges. Symptoms such as impulsivity can lead to impulse buying, excessive credit use or poor budgeting, all of which are directly relevant to managing money effectively.

Executive brain function deficits can affect planning and organisation, which are crucial for reading and understanding documents and adhering to project timelines.

Over the last 20 years, diagnoses of autism and ADHD have risen markedly in the UK, Europe and the US. This increase is mainly due to heightened awareness, expanded diagnostic criteria, improved access to assessments and greater recognition among groups previously less likely to be diagnosed, rather than a genuine rise in the actual prevalence of these conditions.

A few other points of interest to note:

- Both conditions are often misjudged. ADHD's inattentive type, especially in adults or women, can be mistaken for laziness or disorganisation, while autism's more subtle presentations might be dismissed as quirkiness.
- ADHD in women has historically been underdiagnosed due to differences in how symptoms appear. Women often exhibit inattentive rather than hyperactive-impulsive symptoms, which can be overlooked. Hormonal fluctuations during menstruation, pregnancy and menopause significantly influence ADHD symptoms in women, making diagnosis and treatment more complex.
- Studies suggest ADHD is over-represented among entrepreneurs compared to the general population, though exact figures vary; some estimate rates up to 30% among entrepreneurial samples versus about 4-5% in the general adult population.

Now that we have demystified neurodiversity, ADHD and autism, in future articles, I will focus more specifically on what this all means for the finance industry.

Dave Wallace is a user experience and marketing professional who has spent the last 25 years helping financial services companies design, launch and evolve digital customer experiences. He is a passionate customer advocate and champion and a successful entrepreneur. Follow him on X @davejvwallace and listen to the Demystify podcast he co-hosts.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

AI in banking: Why data quality will define the winners

Banks that don't master their data pipelines will end up with expensive AI experiments instead of transformative outcomes, says Karthik Jagannathan, payments advisory lead at ProgressSoft

Artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to transform financial services by amplifying customer engagement, streamlining operations and tightening compliance. If fully harnessed, AI could unlock major revenue streams for banks. When approached strategically, it can be a catalyst for sustainable competitive advantage.

Yet, AI's transformative potential rests on a foundation often overlooked: high-quality, accessible data. In an industry where precision is paramount, poor data can jeopardise success, hinder efficiency and limit revenue growth. The ability or inability to manage data effectively will determine whether banks realise AI's promise or fall short.

DATA QUALITY ROADBLOCK

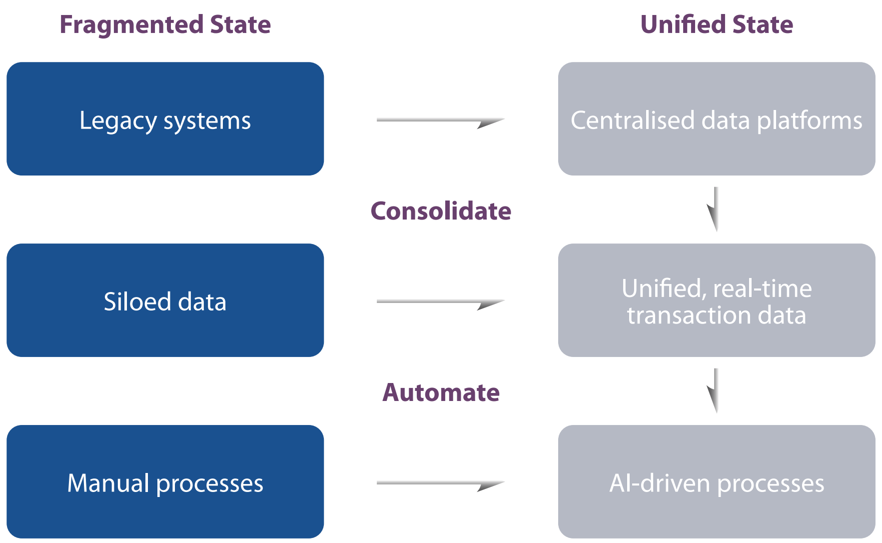
Many institutions struggle with fragmented payment and transaction data. Locked in legacy systems and siloed infrastructure, this information remains difficult to consolidate. The result is incomplete or inconsistent insights that stall AI initiatives and put strategic objectives at risk.

The 'why' is simple: AI is only as strong as the data behind it. Without reliable, unified data, even the most advanced AI models can produce skewed outputs, potentially misidentifying fraud, mispricing risk or providing incomplete insights. That risk makes banks hesitant to scale AI, effectively turning innovation into costly experimentation rather than transformation.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS

Modern data platforms are emerging as a critical enabler. By centralising and organising information, these systems help eliminate silos and ensure consistency. They also enable real-time access, seamless integration across channels and compliance with evolving regulations.

However, the journey is not simple. Banks must allocate significant resources to identify, verify and integrate disparate data sources. The effort is daunting but far from impossible. With focused investment, even the largest institutions can transform disorganised records into a strategic asset.



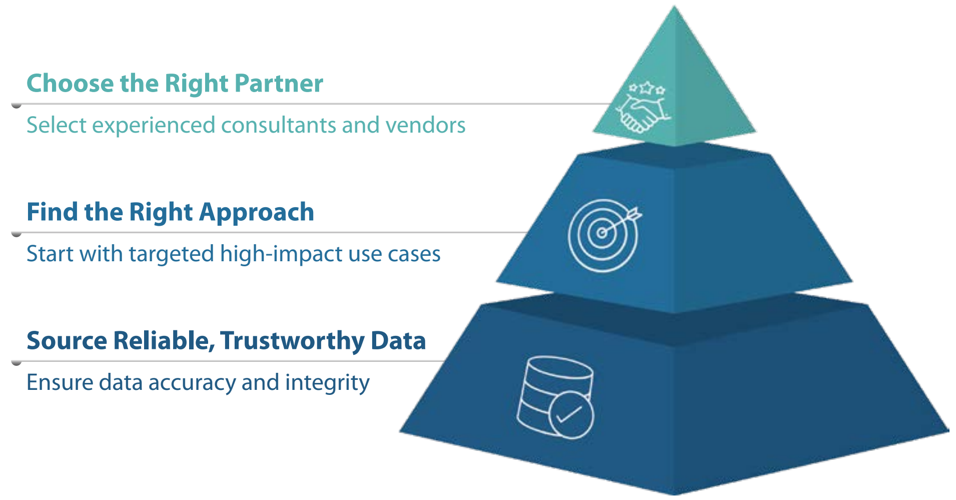
FROM QUICK WINS TO SCALED IMPACT

One proven strategy is to start small and scale smart. By beginning with targeted, high-yield projects – such as fraud detection or customer analytics – banks can secure early wins. These quick successes demonstrate value, rally support and create the momentum needed for broader transformation.

Over time, these initial projects can fuel more advanced applications, from proactive transaction monitoring to predictive cash flow analysis. With the right foundation, AI becomes less of an experiment and more of a disciplined driver of long-term innovation.

WHY EXTERNAL EXPERTISE MATTERS

A successful AI journey in banking rests on three critical pillars (*see image, above right*).



To accelerate this journey, banks should onboard external expertise such as seasoned consultants and visionary vendors who offer proven methods and platforms to accelerate progress. They can map fragmented systems, automate quality checks and deploy AI-driven solutions tailored to financial services.

Collaboration not only reduces setup time but also embeds best practices from the outset, ensuring early wins are sustainable. In an environment where data complexity is the norm, this outside perspective can help transform operational hurdles into competitive advantage.

SEIZING THE AI ADVANTAGE

AI will not be a one-off project for banks; it is an ongoing commitment. By continuously refining data platforms and processes, institutions can adapt to regulatory shifts, evolving customer expectations and new market opportunities.

The takeaway is clear: banks that don't master their data pipelines will end up with expensive experiments instead of transformative outcomes. The real differentiator is not the AI tools themselves, but the discipline with which institutions mobilise their data. Those that succeed will move beyond adoption, setting new standards for resilience, agility and leadership in financial services.

At ProgressSoft, we recognise that AI's success in banking begins with mastering data. With nearly four decades of experience in real-time payments, we continue to help institutions strengthen infrastructures and operational readiness today, so they are prepared to embrace AI-driven innovation tomorrow.

About ProgressSoft

ProgressSoft Corporation is a leading provider of real-time payment solutions designed to meet the evolving needs of the financial sector. Since 1989, ProgressSoft has been a trusted partner to more than 380 banks, central banks and payment service providers across 26 countries, delivering innovation, reliability and long-term value.

Among its flagship offerings is ProgressSoft's Payments Hub Platform, a Swift-certified solution that empowers financial institutions with centralised, interoperable and intelligent payment processing that eliminates silos, enhances efficiency and ensures seamless compliance across diverse payment channels. Complementing this is ProgressSoft's Message Depot, a robust platform for storing, managing and retrieving financial messages and information with precision, turning fragmented data into an accessible, strategic resource. Together, these solutions establish the solid foundation financial institutions need to modernise their operations and prepare for future innovation.

ProgressSoft's versatile solutions portfolio also encompasses instant payments, digital banking, electronic know your customer and electronic check solutions. This is in addition to intelligent signature recognition, BNPL, electronic bill presentment and payment and automated clearing house (ACH), among others.

Today, ProgressSoft stands as a globally trusted partner in automating, enhancing and securing payment, clearing, settlement and financial ecosystems, with intuitive and proven solutions for advancing efficiency, interoperability and compliance in financial institutions worldwide.

MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

Global payment software firm **ACI Worldwide** has acquired Greek fintech **Payment Components**. Founded by CEO Sotiris Nossis in 2014, Payment Components provides modular software components for financial institutions, with a particular focus on account-to-account (A2A) payments, open banking and financial messaging.

Its products include the payment hub aplonHUB, open banking platform aplonAPI, account aggregation SDK UNUapi and financial messaging portal FINaplo. The Athens-based company serves more than 65 customers globally, including JP Morgan Chase, Citi, MUFG and UBS.

Payment Components will be integrated into ACI Connetic, a cloud-native unified payments platform recently launched by ACI Worldwide.

UK-based global acquisition and growth platform **United Fintech** has acquired Lending-as-a-Service provider **Trade Ledger** in an all-share transaction.

Founded in 2016 and headquartered in London, Trade Ledger has developed what it claims is the industry's first AI-native agentic platform to help commercial banking clients streamline their lending operations. Its clients include Barclays and Bank of Queensland.

Trade Ledger's founding team, led by CEO Martin McCann, will exchange their equity for shares in United Fintech. While Trade Ledger will be incorporated into United Fintech's commercial banking division, the company will maintain its existing leadership structure and brand identity.

The acquisition represents United Fintech's second major deal this year, following its purchase of Norway's Commercial Banking Applications (CBA) in February. United Fintech's investor base includes prominent financial institutions such as BNP Paribas, Citi, Danske Bank and Standard Chartered.

London-based regtech companies **FundApps** and **SteelEye** are merging to create a unified compliance platform serving both buy-side and sell-side financial institutions.

FundApps' existing shareholder FTV Capital provided additional equity investment to facilitate the transaction.

Founded in 2010 by CEO Andrew Patrick White, FundApps operates a cloud-based software platform that automates regulatory compliance for more than 160 financial institutions across North America, EMEA and Asia. The platform handles sanctions screening, position limits, shareholding disclosures, filing management and more.

Meanwhile, SteelEye, established in 2017 by founder and CEO Matt Smith, provides trade and communications surveillance, transaction cost analysis, MiFIR transaction reporting, record keeping and trade reconstruction services. Backed by the likes of Ten Coves Capital, Illuminate Financial and Beacon Equity Partners, the company operates from offices in London, New York, Singapore, Bangalore and Braga.

The merged business will serve 350 financial institutions in 18 countries, generating approximately £50 million in annual recurring revenue.

Experian has acquired **KYC360**, a Jersey-based regtech firm. Founded in 2017 by CEO Stephen Platt, KYC360 serves more than 1,000 organisations spanning financial services, insurance, legal and accounting firms, gaming and industrial sectors. Notable clients include AXA, Standard Bank and Altum Group.

The company's Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) platform delivers a range of anti-financial crime solutions, encompassing customer lifecycle management (CLM), onboarding and screening capabilities.

Platt says that he, along with chief commercial officer Tom Delvin and head of technology Neal King, will "maintain our roles within the company under our new ownership".

KYC360's CLM suite, which launched earlier this year, enables organisations to verify and update customer and business information throughout the entire client journey.

Experian will incorporate KYC360's technology into its Ascend platform, which combines data analytics, AI and fraud prevention tools to support credit lifecycle management.

Last year, Experian also purchased US-based behavioural analytics start-up NeuroID.

UK regtech firm **Cube** has acquired **Kodex AI**, adding what it calls a "third strategic pillar" to its flagship RegPlatform solution.

Founded in 2022 by CEO Thomas Kaiser and CTO Claus Lang, Germany-based Kodex AI leverages specialised generative AI agents to help financial institutions identify relevant regulatory updates and reports, analyse requirements and complete other regulatory tasks up to a claimed 95% faster. The start-up is backed by Deutsche Bank after joining the bank's Entrepreneur in Residence programme in 2023 to develop a specialised large language model for financial document analysis.

The combination of Kodex AI's capabilities with Cube's regulatory and risk data will create what the company describes as the "industry's first unified compliance, risk and agentic AI platform". Additionally, Cube says it will introduce co-worker functionality through an AI agent architecture, where AI acts as a "digital colleague within compliance workflows".

Since its inception in 2011, Cube has grown to serve more than 1,000 customers globally with more than 800 employees spread across 20 countries. The acquisition will increase the company's headcount as Kodex AI's Berlin-based team joins the business, adding to the 100 additional employees expected following Cube's announcement in May that it would expand its workforce by 200 over the next 12 months.

The deal for Kodex AI continues Cube's active expansion through strategic acquisitions. Earlier this year, it bought AI-powered risk management data platform Acin; and it 2024, it acquired the Regulatory Intelligence and Oden products and businesses from Thomson Reuters.

UK digital business bank **Allica Bank** has acquired London-based fintech **Kriya** to strengthen its lending proposition for SMEs and expand into embedded payments for the first time.

Founded in 2011 as MarketInvoice before rebranding to MarketFinance and then later Kriya, the SME credit and payments fintech offers working capital solutions, pay later services, offline payments, buyer authentication and a B2B pay later product that launched on Stripe last year.

The purchase bolsters Allica's existing SME product portfolio, which includes business banking and savings accounts alongside a number of lending products.

Richard Davies, Allica's CEO, says the bank plans to lend £1 billion of working capital finance to SMEs over the next three years.

Through Kriya, Allica aims to capture 10% of the established SME finance market by 2028 while also building out its embedded finance proposition.

Kriya will continue to operate under its own brand identity following the acquisition. CEO and co-founder Anil Stocker will remain at the helm and all existing Kriya staff will join Allica.

The deal represents Allica's third acquisition after purchasing AIB's GB SME lending customers in 2021 and bridging lender Tuscan Capital in 2024, shortly after the bank reported its first full year of profitability.

Revolut has acquired **Swiftly**, a Berlin-based start-up specialising in autonomous AI travel assistance, as the fintech giant continues to expand its digital platform beyond traditional banking services.

Swiftly's AI technology leverages large language models and manages the complete travel booking experience through a conversational interface. The platform handles trip planning, reservations, payments and invoicing processes, with the company stating it can complete travel bookings within two minutes.

The start-up was founded in 2023 by CEO Stanislav Bondarenko and CTO Tomasz Przedmojski after being incubated at Lufthansa Innovation Hub, the digital innovation division of Lufthansa Group.

Revolut says the acquisition enhances its existing lifestyle services, which include global eSIM offerings, while advancing the development of its AI financial assistant by "introducing a specialism in lifestyle automation".

The deal includes both Swiftly's proprietary technology and its founding team. Bondarenko has assumed the role of AI lead for loyalty products at Revolut, while lead software engineer Louis Laine joins as a senior software engineer.

Ping Identity, a US-based identity security firm which manages over three billion digital identities globally, is set to acquire UK-based biometric authentication company **Keyless**.

Founded in 2019 by CEO Andrea Carmignani, COO Fabian Eberle, and Paolo Gasti, Keyless' Zero-Knowledge Biometrics technology enables multi-factor authentication in 300 milliseconds without storing biometric data. The solution works across more than 1,000 devices and verifies users through facial recognition and device authentication while keeping biometric information off both devices and cloud servers. Current clients include Experian, IDnow and Moneyfarm.

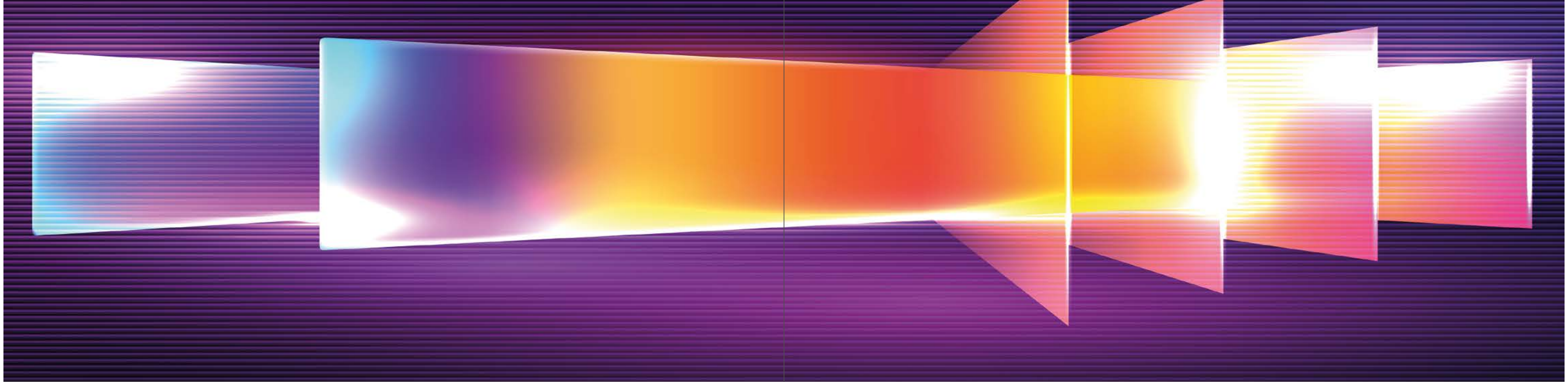
Last year, Keyless raised a $2 million funding round co-led by existing shareholders Rialto Ventures and Experian Ventures to support expansion into North America, Ping Identity's local market.

There is so much more mergers and acquisitions activity worldwide. For more info on these and many other deals, head over to the *FinTech Futures* website!

I'M JUST SAYING…

It's time to rethink, reinvent, and replace banking legacy

By Dharmesh Mistry



Having recently completed a climb up Kilimanjaro, a friend of mine sent me a link for an exoskeleton that is now available to assist hikers in a similar way to electric bikes for cyclists.

It made me think that if car manufacturers were like banks, we'd still be travelling by horse and cart, but the horses would now have exoskeletons to help them go faster.

As I recently wrote, for me there are three key new capabilities that will require the reinvention of banking as the car did for transport:

- Real-time, near-zero cost payments.
- Intelligence-driven banking (the "single brain" as the new core).
- Quantum-accelerated AI.

Now, a few of us, like Leda Glyptis and I, have been banging the drum for core replacement for some time, and while some banks have moved to newer platforms, the rest have seemingly survived by generally not doing anything with their core. So, it might seem we have been like the proverbial doomsayers – "the end of the world is nigh" – when actually the world is fine and banks will live on without taking the risk of changing their core.

> "While we have seen a number of neobanks scaling, in the UK, they have barely made a dent on legacy banks."
>
> **Dharmesh Mistry**

While we have seen a number of neobanks scaling, in the UK, they have barely made a dent on legacy banks. Instead, they have created a 'new layer' on top of the legacy banks, allowing both sets to exist. But even these neobanks have not been designed with the capabilities we have gained in the last three years, such as agentic platforms and distributed ledgers.

New technology capabilities with increases in compute power at reduced costs create an opportunity for a new bank to be designed and operate at a level that directly competes with existing banks. At a high level, this bank could operate in real time – no downtime, no reconciliation, no offline data analysis, no batch processing. There would be no silos with decision-making spread across a multitude of cores and other systems because it's driven by a single brain.

> "The banking world is too busy keeping the lights on to design the ideal bank."
>
> **Dharmesh Mistry**

This bank also wouldn't offer hindsight advice based on historical transactions. It would be prescient, leveraging the capabilities of quantum-accelerated AI. Following the trend of 'vibe coding', this bank could be built and operational in less than two years without thousands of developers. Operationally, it would be self-healing and require a fraction of the IT operations staff banks have today. Leveraging 'explainable AI', it wouldn't require the armies of compliance staff as its software agents could monitor and apply changes as they are published by regulators.

My point is that the banking world is too busy keeping the lights on to design the ideal bank. It's hell-bent on improving the horse and cart. But just what if somebody created an autonomous flying drone? There would be no way to compete.

While we are all busy looking at new technology and how we could improve what we have, I'm just saying that banks need to spend some time rethinking and reinventing banking. Because if they don't do it, when someone does, it will be too late.

Dharmesh Mistry has been in banking for more than 30 years and has been at the forefront of banking technology and innovation. From the very first internet and mobile banking apps to artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR). He has been on both sides of the fence and he's not afraid to share his opinions.

He is an entrepreneur, investor and mentor in proptech and fintech. Follow Dharmesh on X @dharmeshmistry and listen to the Demystify podcast he co-hosts with Dave Wallace.

FINTECH FUNDING ROUND-UP

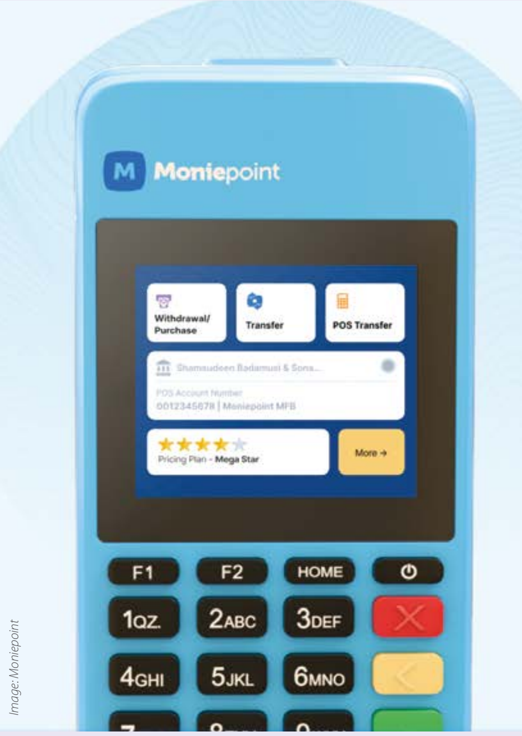


Image: Moniepoint

African fintech **Moniepoint** has raised an additional **$90 million** in Series C equity funding led by LeapFrog Investments, bringing its total Series C to over $200 million ($110 million was secured in a first tranche of investment last year).

The initial raise was led by Development Partners International, through the African Development Partners III Fund. Lightrock, Alder Tree Investments, Visa, Proparco, Swedfund, Verod Capital Management, the International Finance Corporation and Google – through its Africa Investment Fund – also participated in the Series C raise.

Formerly known as TeamApt, Moniepoint was founded in 2015 by CEO Tosin Eniolorunda and CTO Felix Ike. The company, which has offices in Nigeria, Kenya, the UK and the US, provides digital and cross-border payments, business and personal banking, credit and business management tools to approximately 10 million business and personal banking customers, while processing more than $250 billion in digital payments transaction value annually.

The new funds will be used to fund the company's continued expansion across Africa further afield. Earlier this year, it launched international remittance solution MonieWorld and acquired a 78% majority stake in Kenya's Sumac Microfinance Bank.

Eniolorunda says his company's "ultimate goal" is "financial happiness for Africans everywhere".

Mexican challenger bank **Plata** has landed **$250 million** in a Series B investment round led by Kora Management, Moore Capital Management and TelevisaUnivision, with additional participation from Audeo Ventures. The funding round values Plata at $3.1 billion.

Founded by former Tinkoff Bank executives Alexander Bro, Danil Anisimov and CEO Neri Tollardo, Plata launched in April 2023 with an initial focus on providing credit cards, buy now, pay later (BNPL), and other digital banking services to underbanked populations in Mexico. The following year, it received a full banking licence.

Earlier this year, Plata raised $160 million in a combined Series A equity round, with a valuation of $1.5 billion. It is now understood to have raised around $1 billion in combined debt and equity financing to date, including a $100 million credit facility arranged with Fasanara Capital.

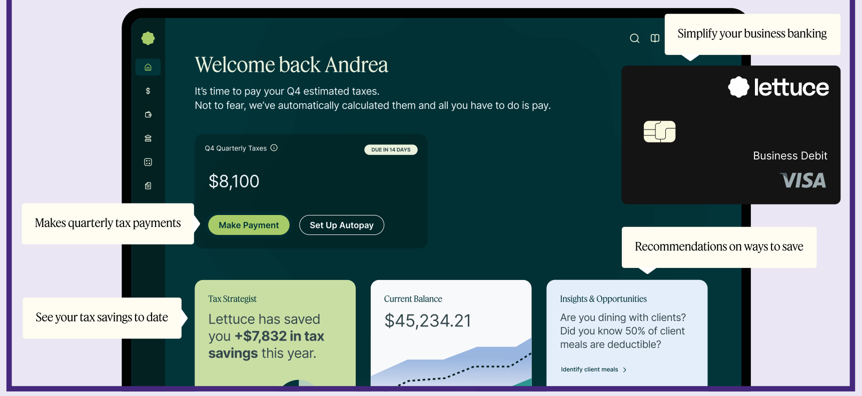
The latest funding will go towards its full-scale launch as a bank, it is understood, including payroll, SME lending and international transfer capabilities in the pipeline, as well as expanding into new markets such as Colombia.

US-based **Lettuce Financial** has completed a **$28 million** funding round, led by long-term backer Zeev Ventures (it previously led Lettuce's $6 million seed round in spring 2024 as well as its $15 million Series A later that year).

Established in 2023 by Ran Harpaz to address the financial needs of solopreneurs, contractors and freelancers, Lettuce's platform automates tax and accounting processes while providing an array of business management tools, including expense tracking, banking services, invoicing and payroll processing.

The latest investment will fund its product expansion, focusing on retirement planning with Solo 401(k) and SEP IRA guidance.

Lettuce has also acquired Besolo, a domestic start-up that provides health and retirement benefits access.



Deel, a US-based HR and payroll company, has completed a **$300 million** Series E funding round co-led by new investor Ribbit Capital and existing backers Andreessen Horowitz and Coatue Management.

The round, which also included participation from General Catalyst and Green Bay Ventures, among others, values Deel at $17.3 billion. This represents a significant increase from the company's $12 billion valuation secured after a secondary share sale earlier this year. The company was valued at $5.5 billion following its $425 million Series D round back in 2021.

Founded in 2019 by CEO Alex Bouaziz and CRO Shou Wang, Deel initially started out as an escrow platform for freelance workers before expanding into a comprehensive HR suite offering managed payroll, hiring and payment solutions. The California-based company now processes $22 billion in payroll annually and serves more than 37,000 businesses, including enterprise clients such as Nubank, Fidelity and Klarna, supporting 1.5 million workers across more than 150 countries. It recently surpassed $1 billion in annual recurring revenue.

Deel is also looking for more acquisitions. Last year, it bought London-based money transfer start-up Atlantic Money and South African paytech PaySpace.

Singapore-based **Pave Bank**, which claims to be the "world's first programmable bank built for digital assets and the AI era", has secured over **$39 million** in a funding round led by Accel.

The investment was supported by Helios Digital Ventures, Financial Technology Partners, Yolo Investments, Kazea Fund, GC&H Investments, Tether Investments, Quona Capital and Wintermute. This latest round brings the company's total funding to date to more than $44 million, following its $5.2 million seed round led by 468 Capital when the bank emerged from stealth in late 2023.

Pave Bank's unified platform allows businesses to manage traditional fiat and digital assets simultaneously in real time while automating treasury functions. The platform combines conventional banking services such as card issuance, deposits, payments, FX liquidity,and treasury management with digital asset management, instant settlement networks and OTC trading capabilities.

Digital asset infrastructure provider **Ripple** has achieved a **$40 billion** valuation following a $500 million funding round led by investment firms Fortress Investment Group, Citadel Securities, Pantera Capital, Galaxy Digital, Brevan Howard and Marshall Wace.

The valuation represents significant growth from Ripple's 2019 Series C funding of $200 million at a $10 billion valuation and the subsequent $15 billion assessment in 2022 when the company repurchased those shares.

The latest cash injection follows what Ripple describes as its "strongest year to date". Its USD-backed stablecoin RLUSD recently reached a $1 billion market capitalisation within its first year of operation.

Since its 2012 founding as an open-source payment protocol, Ripple has evolved into a comprehensive digital asset platform offering custody, stablecoins, prime brokerage and corporate treasury services. Under CEO Brad Garlinghouse's leadership, the company has processed over $95 billion in payment volumes, supported by 75 regulatory licences and a global network spanning more than 300 customers across 40 countries.

Furthermore, Ripple has been pursuing an aggressive acquisition strategy, completing six deals over the past two years (see p7).

Portuguese fintech **Feedzai** has achieved a valuation exceeding $2 billion after raising approximately **$75 million** in a Series E funding round. The investment round featured continued backing from existing investors Oxy Capital and Buenavista Equity Partners, and new institutional partners Iberis Capital, Lince Capital and Explorer Investments.

Founded in 2011, Feedzai offers a suite of cloud-based risk management solutions, including anti-money laundering (AML), transaction fraud prevention and customer verification tools. The company claims to currently safeguard over $70 billion in annualised payment volume across card transactions and bill payments globally.

This latest funding round follows Feedzai's $200 million Series D in 2021, which valued the company at $1 billion, and comes hot on the heels of the company's acquisition of US-based data integration and onboarding specialist DemystData earlier this year.

Feedzai has been recently selected as the primary provider of fraud detection and prevention services for the European Central Bank's (ECB) digital euro. Under this agreement, valued at €79.1 million (with potential to reach €237.3 million), Feedzai will deliver fraud risk scoring for every digital euro transaction in collaboration with subcontractor PwC.

This is just a snapshot of the fintech funding activity worldwide. For more information on these and many other deals, head over to the *FinTech Futures* website!

MOVERS AND SHAKERS


Image: Monzo
TS Anil

TS Anil is stepping down from his role as group CEO of UK challenger bank **Monzo** in February 2026 after five years at the helm, with **Diana Layfield** set to succeed him.

Anil originally joined Monzo as US CEO in late 2019 from Visa, where he led global payment products and platforms. He became group CEO the following year.

The bank says under Anil's leadership, its customer base has expanded from 4 million to over 13 million users, while revenue has jumped from £67 million to more than £1.2 billion. Monzo also achieved profitability and increased its workforce from 1,000 to 4,000 employees.

Anil says Layfield would be "a fantastic leader who could drive the business at the global level, into this next chapter and beyond". He adds: "While it wasn't in my plan, I knew it was an opportunity I couldn't miss for Monzo."

Layfield spent over eight years at Google in senior roles, including president of EMEA partnerships, VP of product management, and general manager of search, international and growth. She also served as CEO of Standard Chartered Africa in 2011-15 and held several other executive positions at the global bank. Currently, she chairs British International Investment, the UK's development finance institution, and serves as a non-executive director at AstraZeneca.

Monzo has also named a new group chief operating officer (COO), **Shelley Malton**. She will join the bank in early 2026, bringing more than three decades of industry experience. She currently serves as director of operations at NatWest and has previously held the roles of managing director of service at Experian and director of customer services, operations and digital at Vodafone.

Notably, Malton previously worked at Barclays for 18 years, where she rose from sales manager to chief operations and technology officer at Barclaycard Europe.


Bhaskar Peddhapati

Envestnet, a US-based wealth management software provider, has appointed **Bhaskar Peddhapati** as its new chief technology officer (CTO).

Peddhapati succeeds **Mark Davis**, who has served as CTO since April 2024 and has worked for the company for six years.

With over 25 years of experience in fintech, cloud strategy, data platforms and emerging technologies, Peddhapati has been tasked with "infusing artificial intelligence into every layer" of Envestnet's platform, the company says. The platform manages more than $7 trillion in assets and provides a range of services including trading, client relationship management, financial planning, reporting, lending and tax management capabilities.

Peddhapati moves from property analytics firm Cotality (formerly CoreLogic), where he served as divisional CTO and head of mortgage technology solutions. Before that, he spent more than 12 years at Nielsen, progressing from director of technology for its Global Buy platform to global head of data acquisition at NielsenIQ following its 2020 spinout. Earlier in his career, he was VP of business intelligence development and the centre of excellence at Wells Fargo Advisors for six years.

At Envestnet he will report to CEO Chris Todd, who joined the firm at the start of 2025.

Envestnet was acquired by Bain Capital for $4.5 billion last year and has recently offloaded its Yodlee subsidiary to PE firm STG.


Yasemin Swanson

London-based financial services infrastructure provider **OpenPayd** has appointed **Yasemin Swanson** as COO.

Swanson moves from ClearBank, where she held various leadership roles, including head of operations, COO and, most recently, chief business officer during her nearly four-year tenure.

Her career spans almost 25 years across financial services and payments. Beginning at Turkish commercial bank Türkiye İş Bankası, she subsequently spent nearly eight years at Visa, advancing to VP of business service directorate within the European division. Her experience also includes director of operations at GoCardless and digital and operations director at Barclays Payments, where she managed a global team of more than 300 people.

OpenPayd's product suite includes services for stablecoin management, payment acceptance, global payouts and open banking-powered pay-by-bank solutions. The company processes more than €130 billion in annual transaction volume for more than 800 businesses, including eToro, OKX and Libertex.


Daniele Magazzeni

Swiss banking group **UBS** has appointed **Daniele Magazzeni** as its new chief artificial intelligence officer, effective 1 January 2026.

Magazzeni currently serves as chief analytics officer for JP Morgan's EMEA region and Commercial and Investment Bank, overseeing the bank's global analytics strategy across markets, payments, banking and securities services. Before joining JP Morgan five years ago, he spent over 12 years as an academic at King's College London, where he specialised in AI research and published 100+ research papers.

UBS has implemented several AI-focused schemes this year, which it terms "Big Rocks" and which it says have generated more than 300 active AI use cases across the organisation. The bank has also deployed M365 Copilot, and developed its own AI assistant for employees, called Red.


Christoffer Hernæs

Christoffer Hernæs has joined newly rebranded Norwegian fintech **Stø** as CTO.

Stø is best recognised as the company behind the BankID and BankAxept systems in Norway. BankID was launched in 2004 as Norway's primary electronic identification and digital signing system, enabling secure login and digital signatures across public and private services. BankAxept operates as the national payment card system for in-store transactions and is currently used to process 80% of card payments made in Norway.

Hernæs succeeds Heikki Henriksen, who served as Stø's CTO for three years.

Hernæs will lead a team of 170 technologists working across BankID, BankAxept and Stø Kundesjekk, which offers propriety know-your-customer (KYC) services.

He joins from Nordic construction group Skanska, where he was chief digital officer since January 2022. Prior to this, Hernæs worked at Norwegian digital bank Sbanken as director of technology and business development, and at SpareBank 1 as VP of strategy and innovation.

US fintech **Acrisure** has named **Benjamin Funk** as its new CTO and chief AI officer. He joins the company following an 11-year stint at data and AI heavyweight Palantir, where he has held the role of global head of insurance for the past five years.

He will report to Mark Wassersug, who previously joined Acrisure as CTO in April this year but has since transitioned to the role of COO.

Founded in 2005, Acrisure provides a range of insurance, payroll, benefits, cybersecurity, wealth management and real estate services, employing more than 19,000 staff across 24 countries. Earlier this year, it raised $2.1 billion in an investment round led by Bain Capital at a valuation of $32 billion. Shortly afterwards, it agreed a $1.1 billion deal to acquire Global Payments' payroll business, Heartland Payroll Solutions.


Ruwani Hewa

Ruwani Hewa has been named as the new director of payments at UK digital challenger **Starling Bank**.

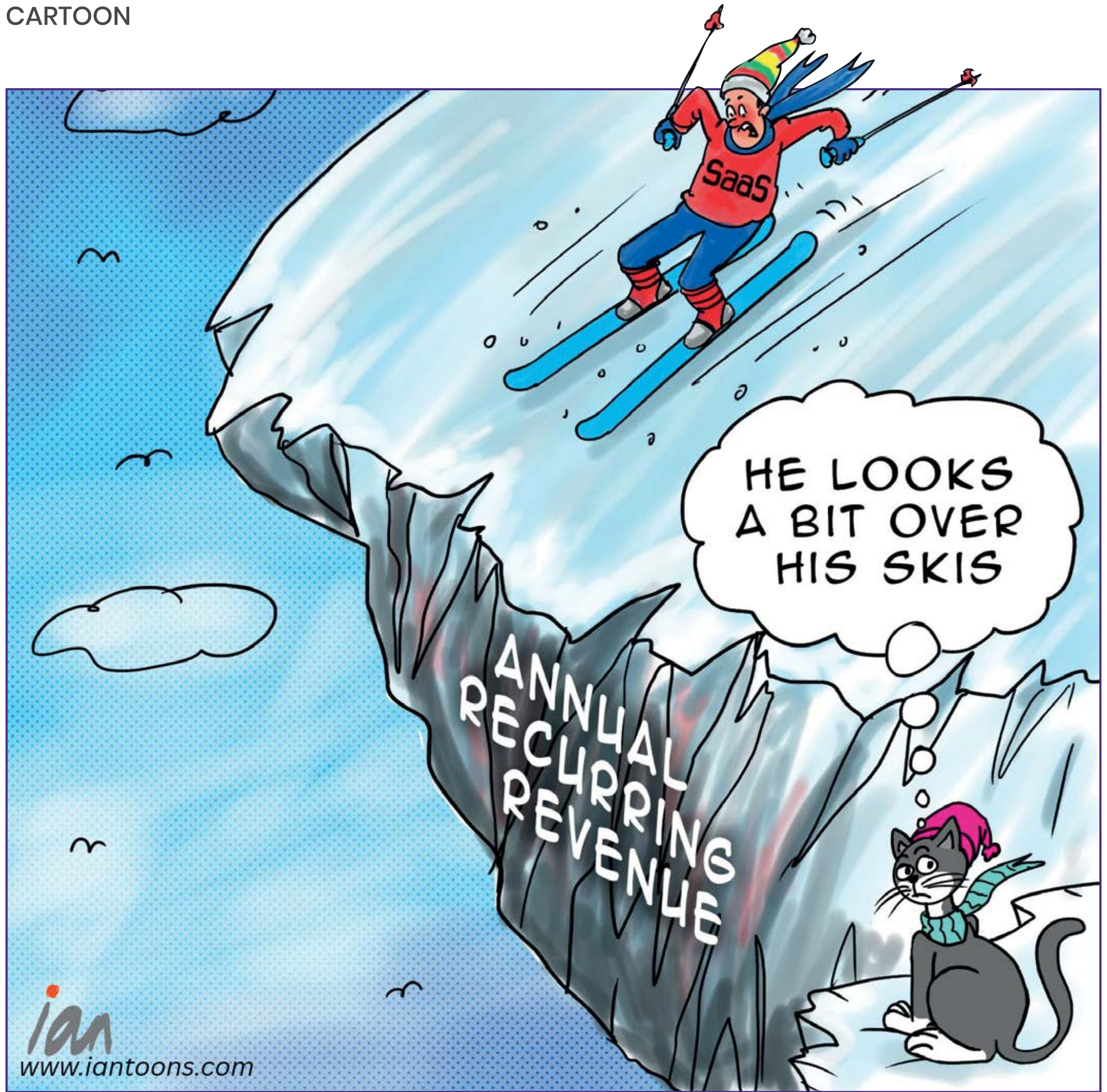
She says she will focus on the "relaunch of Starling Banking Services" as one of her initial priorities. Starling Banking Services was initially launched as Starling Payment Services in 2017 and operates as a Banking-as-a-Service (BaaS) platform that provides Starling's banking infrastructure and payment services to other financial institutions, fintechs and businesses.

Hewa joins Starling from Nuapay, where she has headed all account-to-account and embedded payment products as product and propositions director since January 2022.

Her industry experience also includes several technology-focused roles across American Express, Barclaycard, Collinson and Amadeus, where she was head of product management and merchant services for Amadeus Payments.

For more news on appointments in the industry, head to the Movers and Shakers section of the *FinTech Futures* website.

* All images from LinkedIn unless otherwise stated



"PUMPED"

Cartoon by Ian Foley

For nearly two decades, Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) was the investor's dream of predictability. Instead of heavy, multi-year software contracts, businesses embraced monthly subscriptions. This shift made Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR) and Annual Recurring Revenue (ARR) the core language of start-up finance, metrics meant to signal stability and growth. The fintech boom of the 2010s thrived on this model. Software became more accessible and flexible, letting companies test and switch tools without punishing upfront costs.

But in 2025, the model over-exaggerates actual performance. AI has changed how products are built, adopted and discarded. Customers now move quickly, chasing the latest model or feature, and start-ups can no longer count pilots or short-term trials as real revenue.

Some AI companies are beginning to evolve the model, such as tracking usage-based revenue, model retraining fees or API call volume instead of flat subscriptions. But many are still clinging to the old playbook, chasing ARR numbers that belong to a different era. What once reflected loyal customers now often reflects nervous founders trying to stay in the race.

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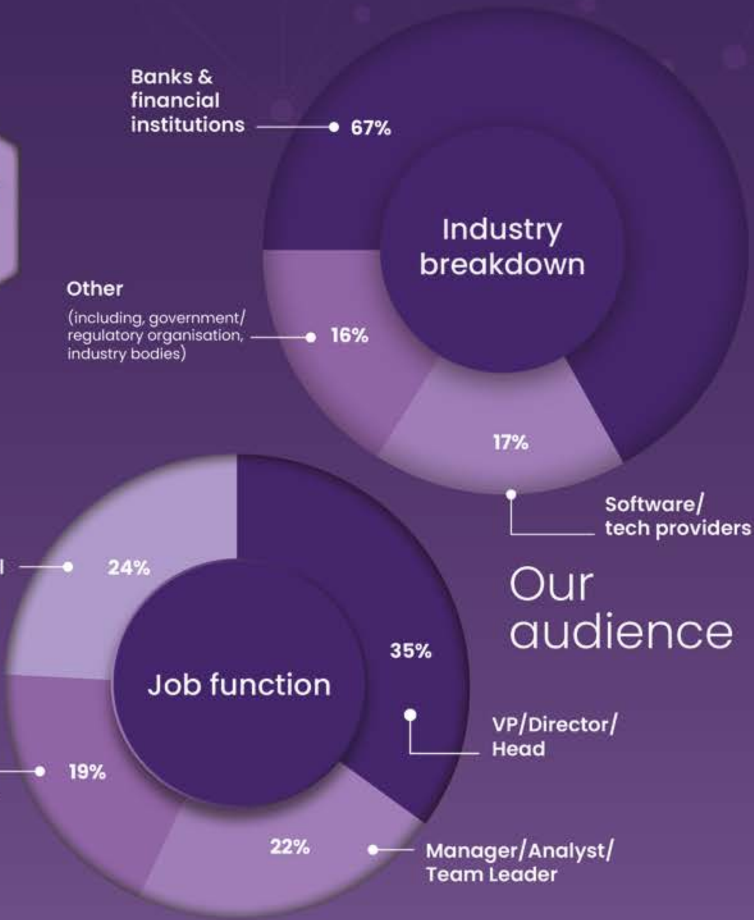

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