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QUARTERLY

BLUEPRINT FOR BUSINESS IMPACT

Engineering the Framework for Business Impact.

Reimagining transformation using business impact AI

Empowering members: Kindred Credit Union’s journey of purpose-driven digital banking innovation

Building a capability-driven future: OTP Bank Group's journey toward core modernization

Edition 21

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From the editor's desk

Dear Readers,

As we navigate the defining economic realities of 2026, the mandate for financial institutions has crystallized: it is no longer enough to simply adopt new technologies; we must meticulously architect their value. Following last quarter's focus on tangible business impact, we recognise that achieving these results requires more than ambition—it requires a definitive plan.

Welcome to the April 2026 edition of eMerge, where our theme is exactly that: **a Blueprint for Business Impact.**

In this issue, we continue to equip you with actionable frameworks that translate strategic vision into measurable reality. The insights within this edition provide the architectural drawings for modern banking success, exploring the strategic paradoxes we navigate as leaders. **Zoltán Kaszás, OTP Bank Group,** lays the critical groundwork for sustainable growth, urging CXOs to transition from rigid "future-proof" planning to a "future-agnostic" strategy that prioritizes adaptable technological and human capabilities. Building on this foundation, industry leaders **Deepak Dastrala (Intellect), Lito Villanueva (RCBC),** and **Felipe Penacoba (Revolut)** demonstrate how to move beyond isolated pilot traps by reframing AI as a core strategy strictly anchored to measurable outcomes and responsible governance. Pivoting to the future of customer engagement, **Nolan Andres** and **Leanne Nullmeyer** of **Kindred Credit Union** showcase that high-tech agility, when blended with purpose-driven leadership, can actually enhance the human touch and deliver exceptional member value. Expanding our perspective to macro-operations, our own treasury team examines **insights from 60 global senior leaders** on balancing complex risks, regulations, and liquidity. Finally, **Vivek Patil (Intellect)** reveals a critical blind spot—the 80% of unstructured banking data currently being ignored—and provides a blueprint for turning untapped information into a definitive, AI-driven lending moat.

I hope these articles spark meaningful dialogue and provide the structural clarity you need for your transformational journey in the year ahead. I am deeply grateful to the leaders who contributed their expertise to this edition, helping us bridge the gap between technological possibility and business reality.

As we shape the discourse for our next edition, we invite visionary banking leaders to share their insights and success stories with our global community. If you would like to contribute an article to our upcoming issue, please reach out to our editorial team at **marketing.gcb@intellectdesign.com.**

Happy reading!

Warm regards,

Mithu Gupta
CMO and Head - User Experience, Consumer Banking,
Intellect Design Arena

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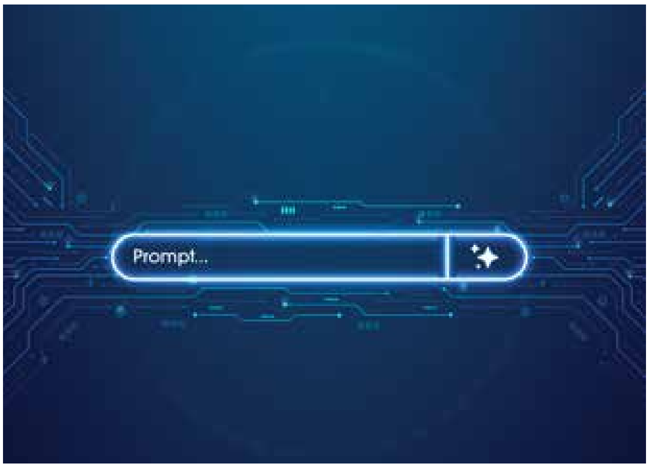

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CUSTOMER SPEAK

Building a capability-driven future: OTP Bank Group's journey toward core modernization

Future success in banking will not come from being future-proof, but from being future-agnostic— building the right capabilities, forging true partnerships, and staying humble enough to adapt.

A perspective from:

Mr. Zoltán Kaszás

MD - Group Digital Directorate,
OTP Bank Group

About the bank

OTP Bank is a leading regional financial services provider with over 100 billion in assets, operating across diverse markets including Bulgaria, Slovenia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Russia. Navigating complex geopolitical and regulatory environments, the bank prioritizes adaptable capabilities, human-centric technologies like its PULZE program, and future-agnostic design to deliver lovable and reliable digital solutions to millions of customers.

Banking today is defined by complexity. Institutions are forced to adapt to volatile geopolitical events, diverse regulatory environments, fast-changing customer expectations, and the relentless pace of digital disruption. These are not distant challenges; they are realities that shape day-to-day work at OTP Bank.

OTP has grown into a regional leader with operations across multiple countries, including Ukraine and Russia. This expansion brings opportunity but also exposes us to crises ranging from war and sanctions to fragmented regulations and technological constraints.

Within weeks, entire banking operations were migrated into the cloud, critical systems were replaced under sanctions, and large-scale cyberattacks were withstood. In facing these realities, one essential truth becomes clear: the future cannot be prepared for by predicting it. Instead, the focus must be on building capabilities, technological, organizational, and human, that allow navigation through whatever future unfolds.

Complexity as the starting point

OTP's journey has been anything but simple. With over 100 billion in assets, operations now span a diverse set of markets: Bulgaria, Slovenia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Russia, and more. Each geography comes with its own regulations and restrictions. In some countries, for example, the cloud is outright forbidden. When the war in Ukraine broke out, Ukrainian operations were migrated into the cloud within three weeks.

At the same time, sanctions necessitated a complete replacement of the technology stack in Russia. These experiences made one thing clear: a single, fixed vision of the "bank of the future" cannot be built. Instead, strategy must be rooted in adaptable capabilities.

"Building a single, fixed vision of the bank of the future is impossible. Instead, strategy must be rooted in adaptable capabilities."

The strategy of capabilities

The approach can be described as a "navigation system" strategy. Just as drivers today rely on Waze or Google Maps to dynamically adjust routes, capabilities are built across technology, processes, architecture, and people, allowing multiple paths to the same destination.

To bring this to life, the OKR (Objectives and Key Results) methodology was adopted. Emotion was also deliberately embedded into the vision: “to create lovable and reliable digital solutions for everyone.” The word “lovable” was not chosen lightly. Inspired by Rachel Botsman’s research on trust, it became evident that unless a solution is both lovable and reliable, customers will not use it.

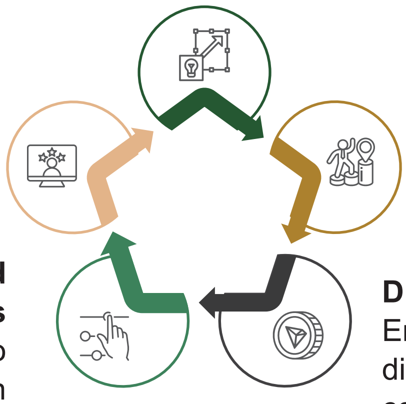
If something is not lovable and not reliable, customers will not trust it. And without trust, they will not use it

Priorities shaping OTP’s transformation

OTP’s capability-driven strategy is anchored in five priorities:

Scalable data
Treating data as the fuel for AI, while respecting regulatory and ethical obligations.

Customer trust
Positioning OTP as more than a bank: a reliable digital partner.



Organizational fitness
Avoiding the “fat”that comes with rapid growth, and staying agile.

Personalized digital experiences
Tailoring services to individual needs in real time.

Disciplined digital investment
Ensuring every euro invested in digital leadership delivers competitive advantage.

These are not theoretical goals. When OTP was targeted by relentless DDoS attacks, at one point hitting 500,000 simultaneous IPs, the customers didn’t care about the details. They expected one thing: lovable and reliable services. Resilience is no longer optional; it is existential.

People at the core

Technology is vital, but transformation cannot succeed without people. This led to the launch of PULZE —a program to train all 40,000 of our employees in four transformational digital capabilities: cloud, low-code/ no-code, data, and AI. Every employee can “level up” depending on their current knowledge level, from awareness, to application, to mastery, with managers receiving an additional leadership focused journey. Over 5,000 colleagues have already completed the fundamentals.

AI, in particular, has reshaped thinking. Three years ago, a partnership was formed with California-based SambaNova to build one of the largest Hungarian English laguage models. The true outcome, however, was not the model itself, but the institutional knowledge gained: understanding what to build, what to buy, and how AI reshapes organizational design.

"The biggest outcome of our AI journey was not the model itself but the knowledge of what to build, what to buy, and what not to do."

Modernizing the core:

Digital transformation is only complete when the core is modernized. While OTP's current system has served the organization well, its legacy technology and sustainability challenges now pose strategic risks. A hybrid approach was adopted: a centralized core provided by a solution partner, combined with selective modules we develop in-house to preserve competitiveness. This balances group-wide standardization with local flexibility.

During evaluation, it quickly became evident that no vendor could offer both cutting-edge technology and full functionality. The right question, then, was not "Which vendor?" but "Which partner?" **Ultimately, OTP chose Intellect Design Arena, because partnership matters more than features.** Modernization is never seamless, but with a partner, responsibility is shared.

For core modernization, you don't need a vendor, you need a partner.

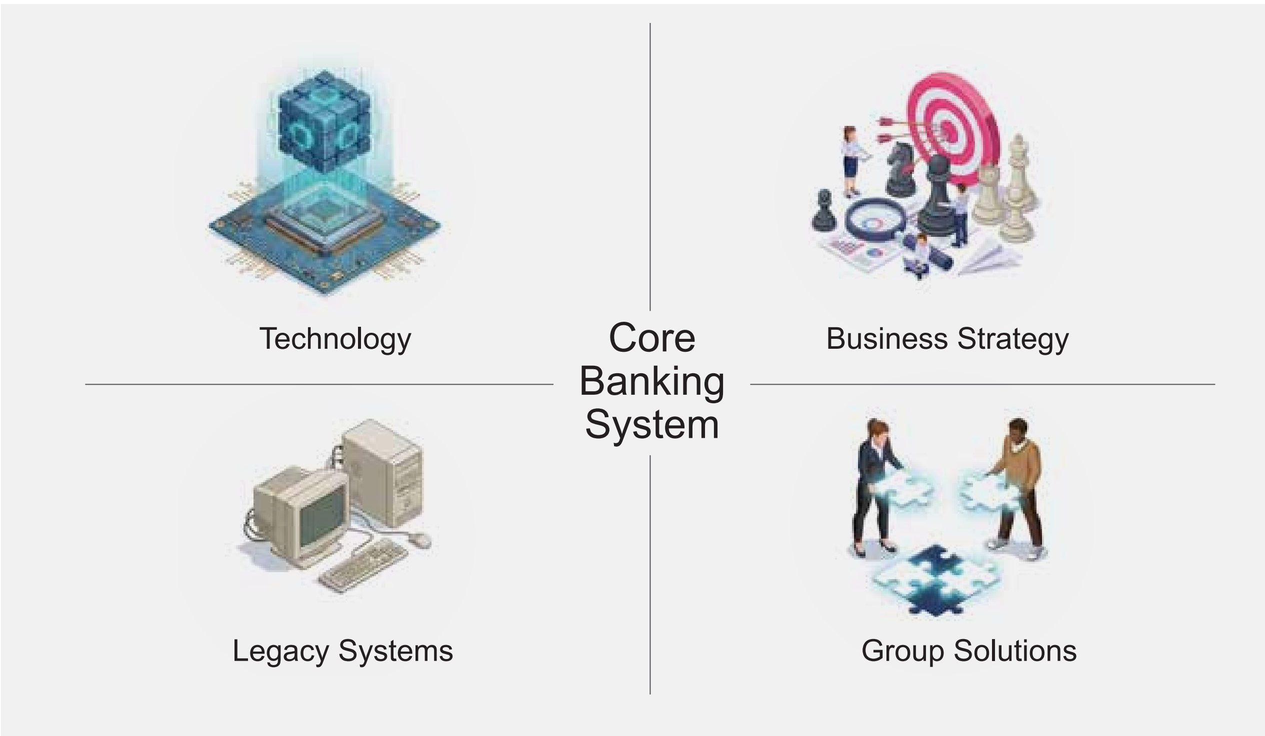


Image : Main drivers of core banking system modernization

Future-agnostic, not future-proof

The phrase “future-proof” is deliberately avoided at OTP. It implies rigidity, an immovable monolith. Instead, the belief is in future-agnostic design: architectures that can change quickly, partnerships that can flex, and capabilities that adapt continuously.

Remaining competitive means asking the right questions, investing wisely, and remaining humble. Large transformations demand openness, a willingness to learn from mistakes, and the discipline to keep moving forward.

“Future-agnostic design is not just about technology; it is a way of thinking.”

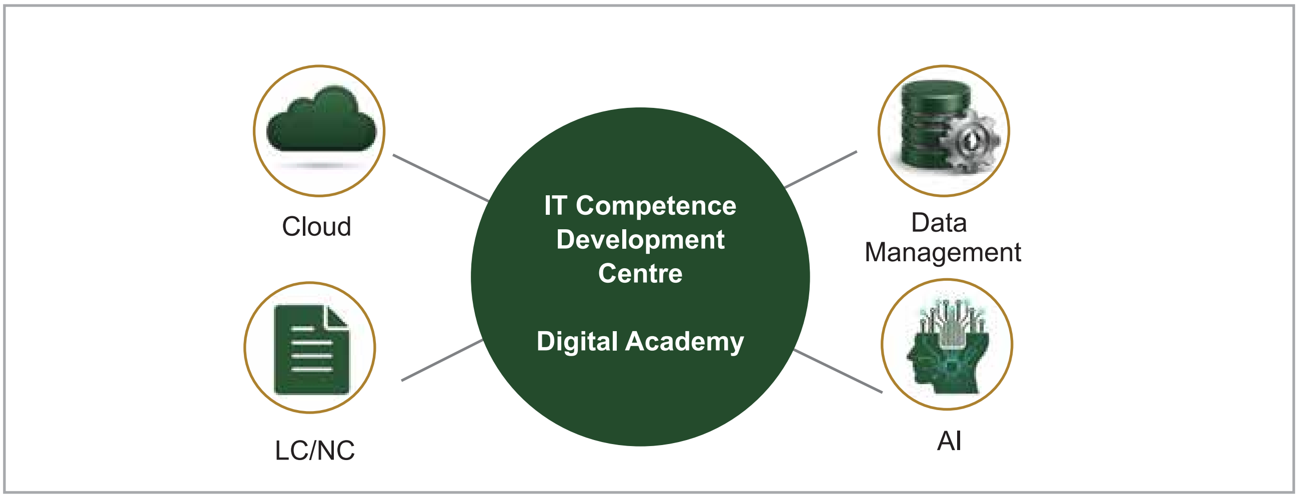


Image : Capability architecture enabling future-agnostic banking transformation

Lessons for the industry

This journey at OTP bank offers several lessons for peers across the industry:

- Focus on capabilities, not predictions. The future cannot be forecast, but capabilities can prepare us for any scenario.
- Trust is the currency of digital banking. Lovable and reliable solutions are essential.
- Empower people alongside technology. Skills programs like PULZE are crucial.
- Seek partners, not vendors. Core modernization requires collaboration, not procurement.
- Embrace agility as resilience. Future-agnostic thinking is the only way to survive shocks and seize opportunities

Closing reflection

At the end of the day, transformation in banking is not about technology alone. It is about the capabilities we build, the partners we trust, and the humility with which we face the unknown. Competitive advantage will come not from rigid plans, but from the ability to ask the right questions and adapt quickly to new answers. The final message is simple: remain humble. Large-scale transformations demand it. Humility keeps us open to change, disciplined enough to learn from mistakes, and resilient enough to keep our speed when the world around us is shifting.

“Capability building, true partnership, relentless innovation, and above all, humbleness, are the only ways to navigate a world where the future cannot be predicted, only prepared for.”

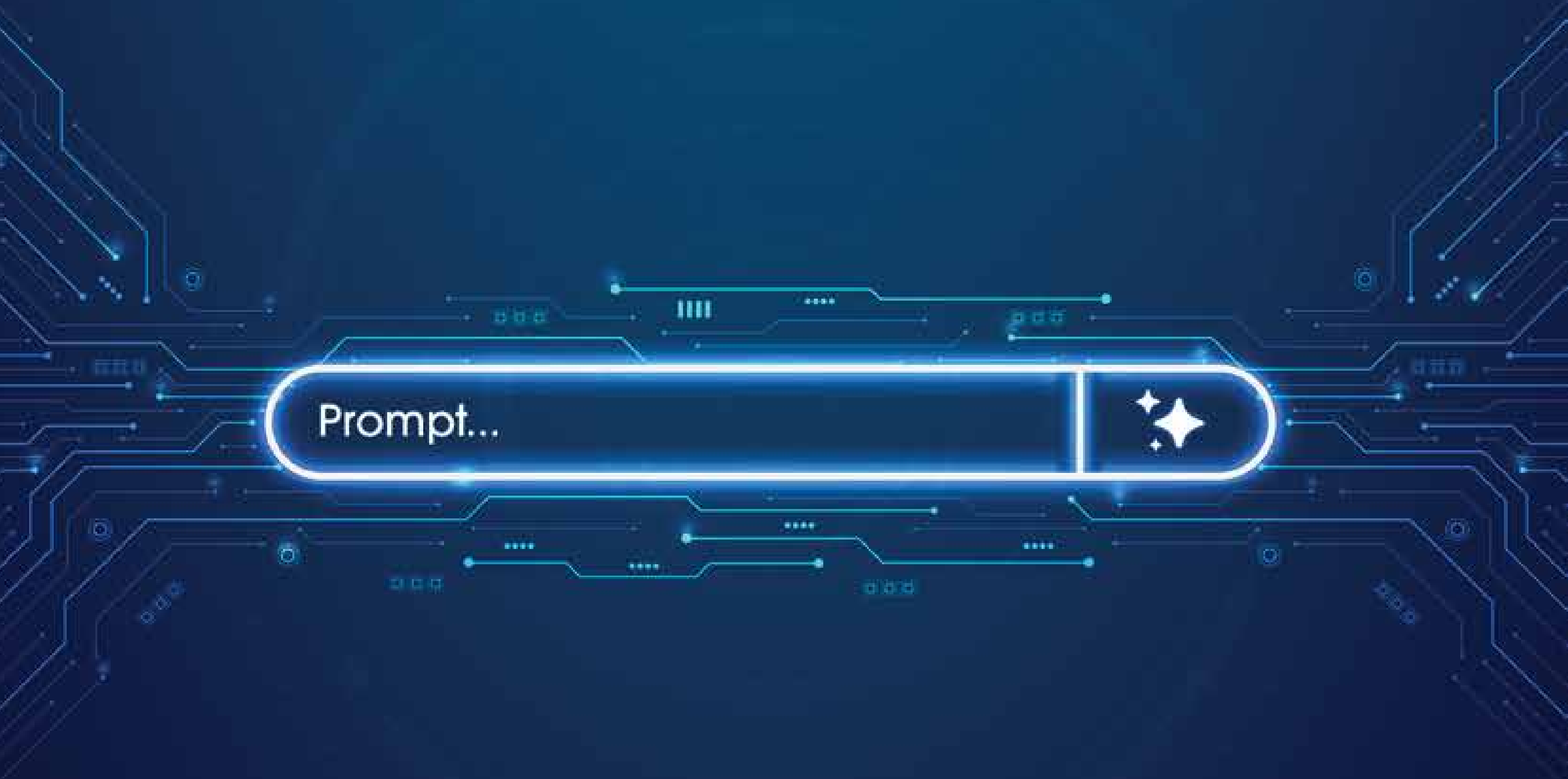
To explore more such real-world insights from global banking leaders navigating similar transformation journeys, **download the full Core Banking Digest here.**

Recommended read::

1. **“Zero Trust Frameworks:**
   Building Resilience in an Always-On World”
   – Lesley Kipling Chief Security Advisor, Microsoft
2. **“Zero Waste Architecture:**
   Driving Operational Excellence with Sustainable Technology”
   – Duncan Scott (BCG)
3. **“Business Transformation in Banking:**
   Aligning Strategy, Culture, and Capability”
   – Donald Coulter
   Advisor – Caribbean Credit Card Corp; Board Member, National Commercial Bank of Anguilla
4. **“Payments Ecosystem:** Banking in an Era of Flux”
   — Rajat Garg (Board Director, Habib Bank AG Zurich; ex-Citibank)
5. **“From Pilot to Business Impact:**
   Scaling and Governing Enterprise AI”
   — Deepak Dastrala (CTO, IntellectAI, Intellect Design Arena)

Reimagining transformation using business impact AI

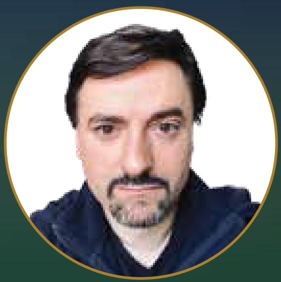
"In banking, AI that cannot be explained cannot be deployed." Learn why trust, ethics, and explainability are the true currencies of enterprise-grade AI.



A perspective from:

Deepak Dastrala,
CTO, IntellectAI

Lito Villanueva,
Chief Innovation & Inclusion Officer, RCBC



Felipe Penacoba,
CIO, Revolut

From experiments to enterprise-grade AI

Artificial Intelligence has moved from research labs and innovation sandboxes to boardroom priorities. Yet, too often, financial institutions fall into the “pilot trap”—running isolated AI experiments that never scale into production. The panel emphasized that true transformation requires reframing AI not as a shiny experiment, but as a business impact model aligned with compliance, ethics, and customer trust.

“The AI journey must begin with clarity of purpose: which business outcomes matter, and how AI delivers them.”

Responsible AI in regulated environments

Banks operate under some of the world’s most stringent regulatory regimes. For Villanueva, this makes responsible AI not just a best practice, but an existential necessity. Trust must be engineered into every layer of AI—from data sourcing and training to model deployment and customer interaction.

Ethical considerations are inseparable from compliance. Bias in lending, opaque decision making, or unchecked surveillance could erode the very trust banks are built on. As Felipe noted, financial services cannot afford a “move fast and break things” mindset. Instead, responsible AI frameworks must prioritize explainability, accountability, and auditability.

“In banking, AI that cannot be explained cannot be deployed.”

Scaling without breaking

Both panelists highlighted a paradox: AI innovation must be agile, but banking infrastructure cannot afford fragility. The solution lies in layered governance models—frameworks that allow institutions to experiment quickly while ensuring that production systems remain stable, secure, and compliant.

For RCBC, AI has been deployed in areas like financial inclusion and customer engagement, where trust and accessibility drive adoption. For Revolut, with its digital-first DNA, the challenge lies in governing rapid scaling across multiple jurisdictions, each with its own regulatory expectations. Both examples reinforce the need for scalable, adaptable AI governance.

“Agility without governance is chaos; governance without agility is stagnation. Successful AI demands both”

Business outcomes first

The panelists agreed that AI adoption must be anchored to measurable business outcomes.
Whether reducing fraud, enhancing customer onboarding, or driving personalized financial advice, every AI initiative must answer the question: what business value does this create?

Felipe stressed that framing AI as a productivity tool alone undersells its potential. Done right, AI can reshape how banks operate at their core—driving new products, unlocking financial access, and transforming customer experience. But success requires constant alignment between AI roadmaps and organizational strategy.

“AI should not be a science project.It must be a business strategy.”

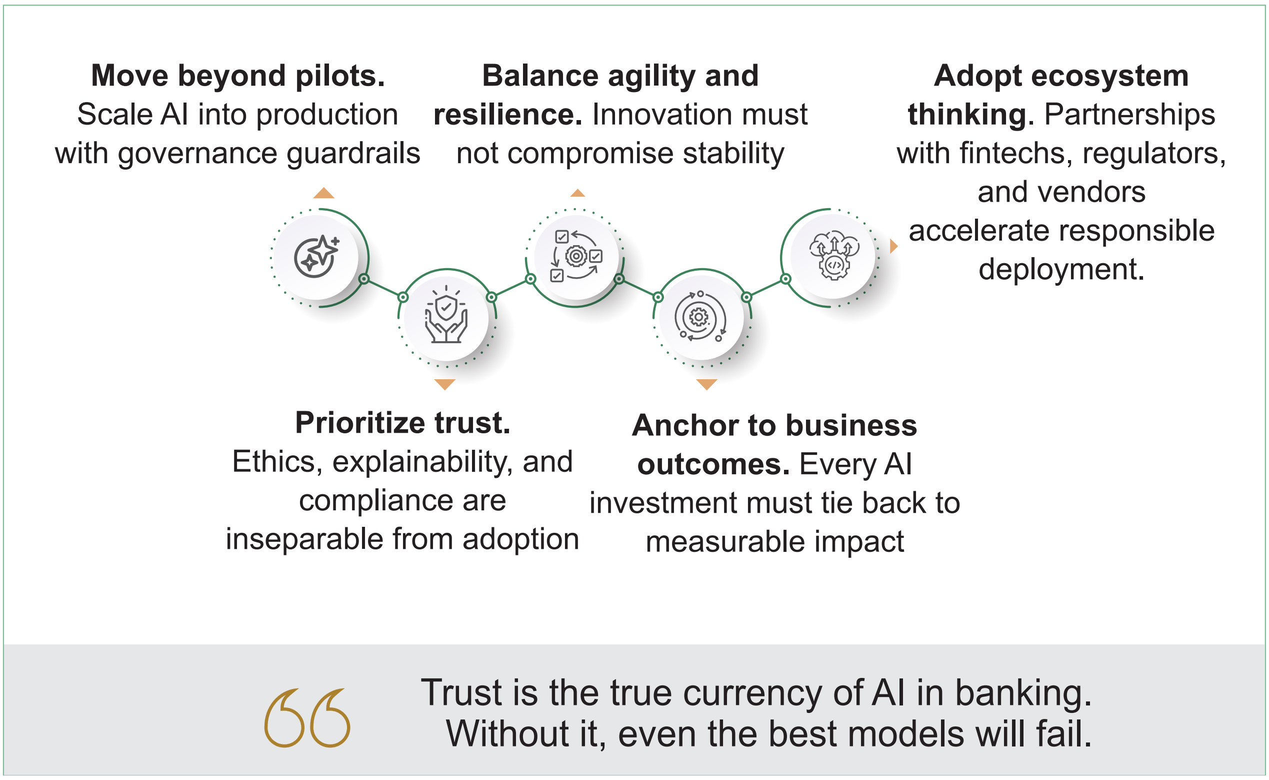


Image : From AI pilots to enterprise impact: the five pillars of responsible scaling

Closing reflection

AI in banking is no longer optional—it is inevitable. But its future will not be shaped by hype cycles or pilot projects. It will be shaped by how well banks align AI to business outcomes, scale responsibly, and govern ethically.

The panel made one point abundantly clear: the banks that win will be those that deploy AI with purpose, discipline, and humility. Not chasing every breakthrough, but embedding the right capabilities that deliver real, trusted value.

“The measure of AI success is not how advanced the model is, but how much trusted impact it creates.”

CUSTOMER SPEAK

Empowering members: Kindred Credit Union's journey of purpose-driven digital banking innovation

Can technology actually improve the human touch in banking? See how Kindred Credit Union blends 60 years of purpose with high-tech agility

A perspective from:

Nolan Andres,

Chief, Technology and Innovation, Kindred Credit Union

Leanne Nullmeyer,

Chief Digital and Marketing Officer, Kindred Credit Union

About the credit union:

Kindred Credit Union is a values-driven financial cooperative based in south western Ontario, Canada, that has been serving its members for over 60 years. Rooted in faith-inspired principles of integrity, compassion, and stewardship, the credit union operates on the promise to help members "make peace with your money." They uniquely blend modern financial wellness with community-focused initiatives, ensuring that member deposits are actively used for good through impact investments in areas like food security and housing stability.

Kindred Credit Union is a partner of Intellect Design Arena. In the conversation that follows, Chief Technology and Innovation Officer Nolan Andres and Chief Digital and Marketing Officer Leanne Nullmeyer discuss how Kindred is translating decades of purpose-driven leadership into digital-age innovation.

As Kindred enters its seventh decade, the credit union is implementing Intellect's eMACH.ai Digital Engagement Platform (DEP) with iTurmeric to build digital capabilities that amplify relationship, not replace it—preserving the human connection at its core. iTurmeric is Intellect's low-code/no-code platform that empowers Kindred's citizen developers to build new user journeys—including UIs, APIs, and workflows—furthering Kindred's commitment to help members make peace with their money.

"Agility requires composable architecture. By modernizing our technology stack and embracing modular, API-driven, cloud-enabled solutions, we're reducing complexity and increasing our ability to adapt"

— Nolan Andres

Kindred Credit Union recently took a leadership role in a coalition of Canadian credit unions to advance digital banking capabilities. What is the strategic advantage of this partnership-led approach to innovation for your members?

From Leanne, Chief Digital and Marketing Officer

This coalition embodies something fundamental to the credit union movement: the belief that we accomplish more together than we ever could alone. When we partner with other credit unions to build digital banking capabilities, we're not just sharing costs—we're choosing cooperation over competition in ways that directly benefit our members.

There's also a deeper strategic truth here: when credit unions collaborate on technology platforms, we preserve capacity to compete where it actually matters—on service quality, community impact, and purpose-aligned advice. We're not wasting resources reinventing the wheel; we're focusing our energy on the distinctive value only Kindred can provide.

From Nolan, Chief, Technology and Innovation

From a technology standpoint, this coalition model delivers three critical advantages. First, it accelerates our pace of innovation; shared development cycles mean we can roll out new capabilities in weeks or months rather than years. Second, it strengthens our security posture by pooling expertise and resources to defend against increasingly sophisticated threats. Third, it future-proofs our infrastructure through interoperable, composable platforms built to incorporate distributed development and evolve as member needs and regulatory requirements change.

Equally important is risk management. By collaborating with other credit unions, we distribute the risk by sharing both the investment burden and the implementation learning curve. This means we can adopt emerging technologies more confidently, test thoroughly within a broader ecosystem, and course-correct quickly based on collective insights. We also maximize the likelihood of continued platform relevance via the inherently increased mindshare of a collaborative model.

The result is enterprise-grade capability delivered with credit union accountability; our members gain sophisticated digital banking backed by the resilience of cooperative development, all while their data and their relationship remains rooted with Kindred.

What does the future of Kindred Credit Union's leadership look like as it relates to the next generation of members who require both values-centered products and a top-tier, omnichannel experience?

From Leanne, Chief Digital and Marketing Officer

The next generation of members is not choosing between values and convenience; they expect both. Our leadership is focused on designing products and experiences that seamlessly integrate purpose with performance. That means intuitive digital journeys, consistent experiences across channels, and financial products that reflect members' beliefs about stewardship, community, and impact. As leaders, our role is to ensure Kindred remains deeply human in how we show up, even as our delivery becomes increasingly digital.

In an era of rising competition, how is Kindred Credit Union using its digital transformation to become more agile, ensuring that 'Making Peace with Your Money' remains a competitive advantage in the modern market?

From Nolan, Chief, Technology and Innovation

Agility requires composable architecture. By modernizing our technology stack and embracing modular, API-driven, cloud-enabled solutions, we're reducing complexity and increasing our ability to adapt. This allows us to test, learn, and improve more quickly, ensuring our systems support innovation rather than constrain it.

From Leanne, Chief Digital and Marketing Officer

Our digital transformation is distinctive because it's not just about speed—it's about ensuring our agility serves our purpose. We're excited about the future Intellect DEP with iTurmeric specifically because it will enable my team to act as citizen developers, creating and iterating digital experiences without waiting for lengthy development cycles. This means when we see an opportunity to help members make peace with their money, we can build the solution in weeks, not months.

The pulse of modern bank treasury: Navigating an era of transformation

Bank treasury is no longer a background function—it is emerging as a critical driver of banking strategy. Once focused on control and compliance, treasury is now expected to balance risk, unlock value, and respond dynamically to an increasingly volatile environment.

This shift is central to Intellect Design Arena's whitepaper, which draws on insights from 60 senior treasury leaders across global markets. The findings offer a clear view of how treasury is evolving—and where the biggest gaps and opportunities lie.

A leadership-driven transformation

With 80% of respondents being CFOs, the research reflects enterprise-level priorities rather than just operational realities. Spanning regions such as Europe, the Nordics, Southeast Asia, and India, the study reveals a consistent trend: treasury is transitioning from a support role to a strategic decision-making function.

Rising complexity and structural pressure

Treasury functions today are navigating unprecedented complexity. **Around 82% of professionals cite managing credit risk (ECL, CVA, VaR) as their biggest challenge,** while **78% highlight the impact of regulations like FRTB and SA-CCR.**

Additionally, 62% report that internal compliance demands already exceed their system capabilities.

These figures point to a deeper issue—treasury is being pushed beyond what existing systems were designed to handle.

The real bottleneck: system limitations

Beyond regulation, the biggest constraint lies in system capability gaps. About 63% of respondents identify challenges in data management, integration, and model validation. **Others point to cross-jurisdictional regulatory complexity (47%) and capital requirement pressures (45%).**

Legacy systems, fragmented data, and manual processes continue to limit agility, making it difficult for treasury teams to respond in real time.

Balancing profitability and liquidity

Treasury is also under pressure to deliver business value. Balancing profitability with liquidity has become increasingly complex amid volatile interest rates and stricter regulations. This is no longer a periodic exercise—it requires continuous, real-time decision-making. Traditional models based on batch processing are proving insufficient.

Digital transformation with execution gaps

While adoption of AI, machine learning, and automation is accelerating, execution remains uneven. Skill gaps, infrastructure constraints, and technology selection challenges continue to slow progress. Many institutions are still early in their journey toward a “smart treasury”—one that is real-time, composable, and intelligent.

Data and ESG: underleveraged opportunities
Data is increasingly recognized as a strategic asset for forecasting and decision-making, yet issues around accuracy, integration, and accessibility persist. Similarly, ESG is evolving from a compliance requirement to a value-creation opportunity, with treasury exploring green products and sustainable investment strategies—though adoption is still maturing.

From function to strategic engine

Treasury is undergoing a fundamental transformation. It is no longer limited to managing liquidity and risk—it is becoming a core driver of enterprise outcomes. However, a significant gap remains between current capabilities and future expectations.

Bridging this gap will require rethinking technology architectures, operating models, and data strategies. For organizations navigating this shift, the full whitepaper offers a deeper roadmap—covering intelligent treasury architectures, real-time systems, and emerging business models.

What Lies Beneath—and Ahead

This article captures only a fraction of the insights uncovered in the whitepaper. Beneath these headline findings lies a deeper exploration of:

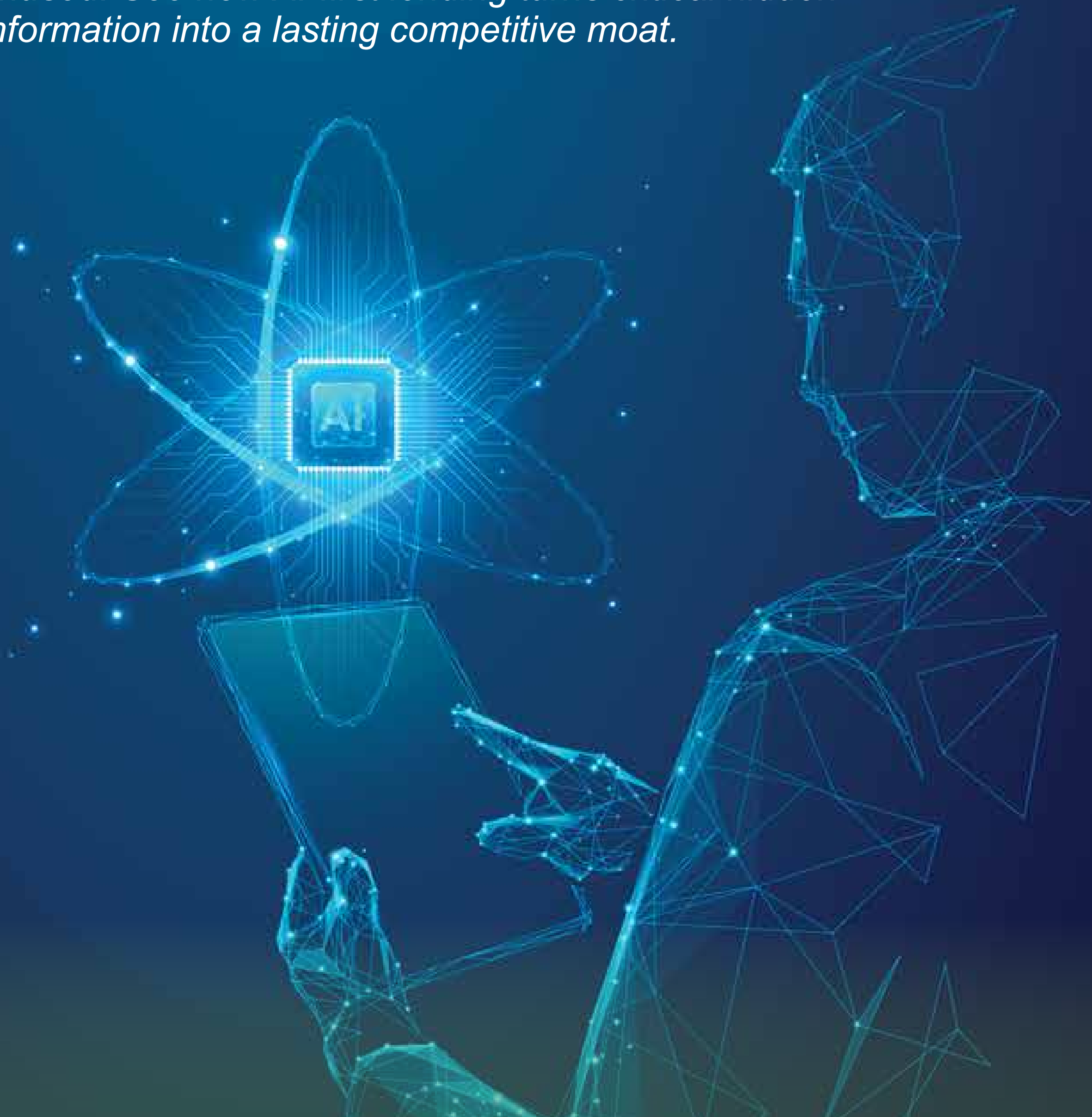
- The architectural blueprint for intelligent treasury
- The shift toward composable and real-time systems
- Emerging business models and new revenue streams
- Frameworks for building a future-ready treasury

For leaders navigating this transformation, the full report offers not just analysis, but a roadmap for action.

To explore the complete findings and uncover how treasury is being redefined across global markets, access the full whitepaper:

AI-first lending: redesigning the credit enterprise for the next decade

80% of the unstructured banking data still going unused. See how AI-first lending turns critical hidden information into a lasting competitive moat.



A perspective from:

Vivek Patil

Chief Growth Officer, Consumer Banking, Intellect Design Arena Ltd.

Introduction

John Miller runs a mid-sized auto components manufacturing business. One of his key OEM client doubles its orders, and he needs a $600,000 working capital line to procure raw materials quickly. He approaches his bank and submits financial statements, tax filings, bank statements, and projections—expecting a timely decision.

Inside the bank, the file begins its slow journey. Data is extracted from documents and re-entered into internal systems. Financial ratios are rebuilt in spreadsheets. Queries move back and forth between the underwriter and the relationship manager, creating multiple versions of the same document. Phone calls resolve key questions, but much of that context is never captured in the system. What should take days stretches into a week.

For John, the impact is delayed access to credit and strained suppliercommitments.

For the bank, the consequences are broader. In origination, slow turnaround leads to lost business and poor customer experience. In underwriting, manual assessment reduces first-time-right quality and weakens risk visibility, increasing delinquency risk. In servicing and operations, fragmented systems reduce efficiency. In collections, delayed signals impair recovery outcomes.
Most banks today have digital loan systems in place. But the constraint is no longer digitization—it is the lack of intelligence within the workflow. Until lending evolves from simple process routing to true intelligent orchestration, friction will persist across the lending lifecycle.

"In lending, AI-first is not an overlay but a structural redesign across origination, decisioning, servicing, and collections. Competitive advantage will come from building an "Enterprise Knowledge Garden" that transforms tacit knowledge into a compounding intelligence layer."

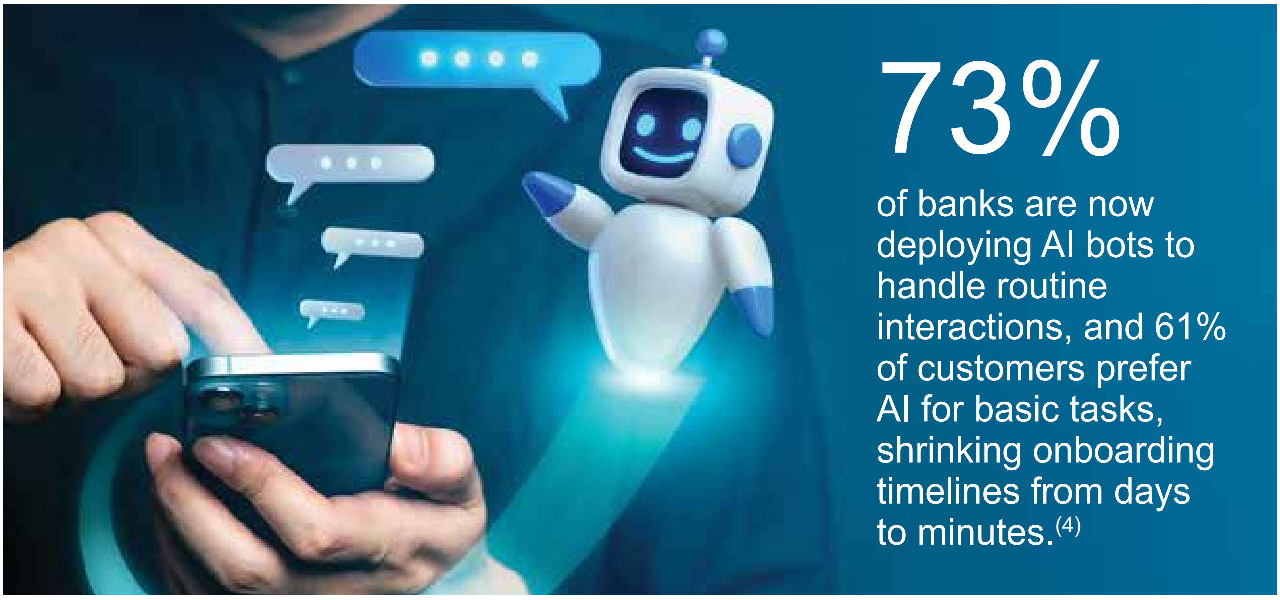
Reimagining lending customer acquisition journey with AI

The lending process has evolved significantly over the past two decades, driven by the adoption of digital technologies, advanced analytics, AI, APIs, and automation. These innovations have delivered substantial business impact for lenders and national economies.

Technology	Business Growth	Operational Efficiencies	Risk Mitigation
Digital	New products - BNPL	Low touch operations	Lower employee frauds
API economy	Ecosystem based engagement	Faster KYC & borrower information access	Data from source eliminating scope for forgery
Advanced analytics & AI	Hyper personalization	Enhanced decision support	Lower probability of default
Automation	Faster turnaround time (TAT) and higher first-time-right (FTR) rates improving conversion	Lower cost to serve	Lower human errors

Table 1: Adoption of technology in the lending process

While these innovations have enabled new channels, most improvements have focused on existing offerings and processes. Today, AI has the potential to fundamentally disrupt the loan acquisition process, and this is where leaders will focus their efforts.



AI first disruptions in lending

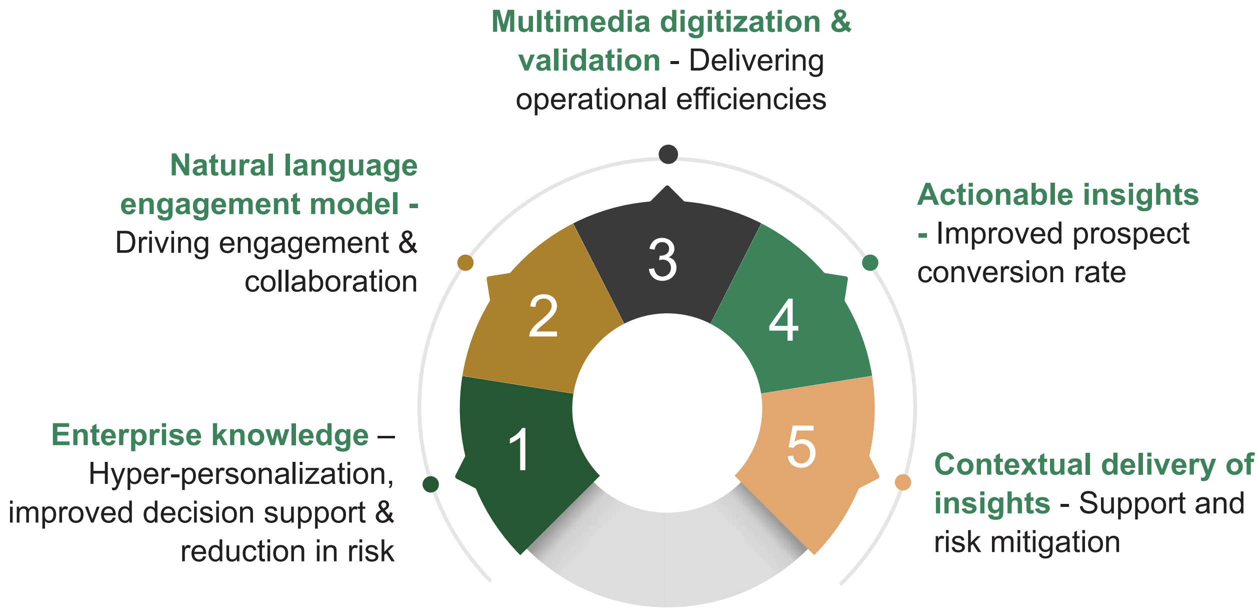


Image : AI-first disruptions in lending

Enterprise knowledge

AI requires extensive information. Banks hold ~80% of their data in unstructured formats (audio, video, emails), with only 3% of organizations actively evaluating it [(3)] — leaving the vast majority of potential insight untapped. Enterprises must unlock implicit and tacit knowledge within the organization and establish new data channels. The ability to access untapped and emerging information sources will distinguish leaders from laggards.

While connecting to public digital infrastructure and shared data ecosystems is essential, it will not be the main differentiator, as it is available to all industry players. True differentiation will depend on how effectively organizations leverage AI to use the unstructured data. Enterprises should integrate these insights and expand beyond traditional banking ecosystems. For high-value segments such as SMEs, banks can orchestrate ecosystems with services such as invoicing, expense management, accounting, and taxation. This approach enhances customer retention and provides deeper business insights for personalization, pricing, and risk management.

For non-priority segments, such as education, banks can participate in third-party ecosystems, which may offer less granular insights but still provide more information than traditional sources. The foundation of the AI-first model will depend on how banks and lenders develop their Enterprise Knowledge Garden.

Business impact – business growth and risk mitigation

Structured & linear workflows to unstructured & contextual conversational engagements

Current lending processes are highly structured and linear. While this works for simple products like personal loans or BNPL, it creates overhead and redundancies for complex products such as mortgages or small business loans, which involve multiple stakeholders. Digital Experts simplify such complex lending journeys by the embedded intelligence across every stage of the lifecycle. In origination, they accelerate onboarding through automated document extraction and the ability to process unstructured application inputs. During underwriting, they enable comprehensive risk assessment and intelligent summarisation to support stronger credit decisions and lower NPA risks. Beyond disbursement, they enhance customer service through autonomous query resolution and strengthen collections with AI-enabled case allocation and persona assistants to improve recovery outcomes.

However, banking has now evolved from manual, high-cost human servicing to scaled chatbot automation, with 73% of banks now deploying AI bots to handle routine interactions.[(4)] Today, AI adoption has further evolved with AI-first models enabling intelligent, context-aware engagement — 61% of customers prefer AI for basic tasks, and onboarding timelines have shrunk from days to minutes.[(4)] AI enables hybrid models that overlay group conversations among all stakeholders, allowing for unstructured and contextual engagement. This approach accelerates response times, improves information flow, and increases conversion rates. Additionally, it captures tacit knowledge shared during interactions, which can further enhance decision support systems.

Business impact – business growth & operational efficiency

Multimedia insight generation

Banking has evolved from structured, email-based interactions to conversational channels such as chat and voice, with 70%+ of customers now preferring digital conversational engagement.[(6)] As these interactions grow, banks must extract insights not only from documents and emails, but also from contact center recordings and video conferences — converting conversations into institutional memory and reducing knowledge loss from workforce turnover. Institutions leveraging conversational AI with enterprise context have reported up to ~60% reductions in average handling time and customer satisfaction improvements of up to ~50%, demonstrating the tangible impact of contextual, intelligence-driven engagement.[(4)]

Business impact – protecting institutional memory while improving customer satisfaction

Actionable insights – shift left

AI in credit risk assessment reduces the time to approve loans by 50-60%.[(8)]

When relationship managers receive predictive insights upstream, this further strengthens applications before they reach underwriters, reducing friction and enabling higher effective throughput without adding headcount. Many loan rejections could be avoided if relationship managers had insights into underwriter decisions. Providing timely insights and recommended actions enables managers to help borrowers strengthen their applications, improving conversion rates. Delays in remediation from underwriters can result in lost opportunities in today's competitive environment.

Business impact – improved prospect conversion rate & operational efficiency

Key imperatives for leaders to scale in the AI-first landscape

The AI paradigm is clearly disruptive. Leaders must focus on four key layers to scale AI-first lending and ensure effective adoption throughout the lending journey.

- **Intelligence infrastructure:** Organizations should leverage curated knowledge frames to power digital agents, including institutional ontologies, policy logic, and decision scaffolds, to analyze and simplify workloads. This approach improves efficiency and reduces errors. Leveraging internal and ecosystem data provides early warning signals and behavioral patterns beyond credit ratings, while accessing new data channels as they emerge. An open architecture is essential for data and model interoperability, enabling seamless integration and multi-model orchestration.

- **Trust and protection layer:** It is essential to ensure data security through compliance with global and local data protection regulations (e.g., GDPR and equivalent regional frameworks), and sectoral norms, as well as implementing encryption, masking, and data lineage. Building a trusted ecosystem requires both compliance and stakeholder confidence. AI systems should also operate with role-based entitlements, maintaining consistent control across users and automated agents.

- **Governance and human oversight:** Strong governance ensures AI-driven lending is defensible, explainable, and operationally sound. Human oversight is necessary for judgment in outlier cases, such as underwriting exceptions, and for maintaining auditability and traceability. This layer reassures boards and regulators that efficiency improvements do not compromise reliability.

- **Enterprise operating model & strategic moat:** Organizations must take a holistic approach, viewing this as a strategic partnership and establishing guardrails for technological advancement, rather than simply procuring technology. Over time, a strategic moat will be built from protected enterprise knowledge, data assets, and embedded decision logic.

These four layers are interdependent and must be designed and managed together. While generating deeper insights is important, delivering them to the right stakeholder at the right time in the acquisition process is even more critical.

Insights should be integrated contextually into the process to ensure effective adoption.

As AI matures, the gap between leaders and laggards will widen, with success determined by agility and adoption strategy.

Conclusion: The strategic mandate for AI-first lending

The transformation underway in financial services is not incremental — it is architectural.

Over the past two decades, digital technologies improved access, distribution, and efficiency. The next decade will be defined by intelligence—how banks unlock enterprise knowledge, convert unstructured data into institutional memory, and embed contextual reasoning across lending.

In lending, AI-first is not an overlay but a structural redesign across origination, decisioning, servicing, and collections. Competitive advantage will come from building an “Enterprise Knowledge Garden” that transforms tacit knowledge into a compounding intelligence layer.

AI-first models replace linear workflows with contextual, conversational engagement—accelerating decisions, reducing friction, and capturing reusable insights. By embedding predictive intelligence early in the process, banks improve application quality, increase conversions, and scale underwriting without proportional headcount growth.

AI-first lending with PF Credit

With PF Credit, powered by Purple Fabric and optionally integrated with eMACH.ai Lending, intelligence is embedded across origination, underwriting, servicing, and collections - not as automation, but as real-time reasoning and continuous knowledge compounding.

The outcome is measurable and structural: faster and higher-quality origination, sharper risk calibration, lower operating costs, stronger recovery performance, and reduced portfolio volatility. In an environment where speed, insight density, and risk precision define profitability, AI-first is not a feature layer. It is the foundation of a more adaptive, resilient, and performance-led lending institution.

Book a meeting with our subject matter experts now for a deeper discussion on how PF Credit can support your organization’s lending transformation. We look forward to continuing the conversation and supporting your journey toward AI-first lending.

Disclosure: *The story, all names, characters, and incidents portrayed in this document are fictitious. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased), places, buildings, and products is intended or should be inferred.*

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