

Part three of a three-part series focusing on the changing landscape in wealth management

# Building a Client-centric and Advisor-centric Platform

accenture  
High performance. Delivered.



The wealth management industry is undergoing profound change: new regulations, a shifting competitive landscape, and a rapidly evolving customer. No one knows this better than financial advisors themselves: ninety percent of advisors said that their customers are more knowledgeable about investing (both about the product options available to them and the investing process itself) than they were five years ago, according to Accenture’s Voice of the Financial Advisor Survey.<sup>1</sup> Clients of all ages are more tech-savvy, more empowered, and more knowledgeable. What’s more, customers expect wealth management firms and advisors to deliver a high-touch, personalized service on a digital platform that can be accessed from anywhere, at anytime.

To address this, many management teams in the industry have been charged with creating a customer-centric platform for delivering a premium advice experience—particularly as technology transforms the client-advisor relationship. The “new” client-advisor experience is one that emphasizes precise, goals-based advice – meaning advice targeted to the individual at the right time – and delivered with mobility and transparency. At the same time, firms are under pressure to make their advisors and their teams more productive and to empower them with the same digital access demanded by their customers.

Solving for the requirements of both the customer and the advisor is best served by creating a technology platform that recognizes there is one experience and tailors that experience to each user. Firms that can do this, and do it well, will be rewarded with better client engagement, greater advisor loyalty, job satisfaction, and technology adoption—and should ultimately be able to gain measurable changes in productivity and revenue.



## Changing the Client-Advisor Experience: The Client-centric Approach

To help meet the challenge of providing value to clients, management teams should understand the depth of relationship each client represents as well as the breadth and totality of the relationship. To do this, wealth management firms need to start looking beyond the individual, household or business, and take into account the broader community of which they are a part. Firms also need to take a customer-centric approach to financial planning as opposed to a product-centric approach. To do this effectively requires a trusted advisor relationship to be in place, not just a portfolio of available products. It also calls for:

- Understanding the customer's short- and long-term life and financial goals and ensuring financial information is tailored to them
- Offering the right financial information at the right time and via the right medium
- Making it easier to reach financial decisions, whether alone or in concert with an advisor
- Making it simple to compare financial returns and potential returns against benchmarks

Wealth management firms should also keep up with the innovations that are being introduced by fintechs so they can maintain and even grow their market share. In particular:

1. Fintech's standalone model, which appeals to the do-it-yourself strain found among younger clients.
2. Fintech innovation around user-led design and user experience.

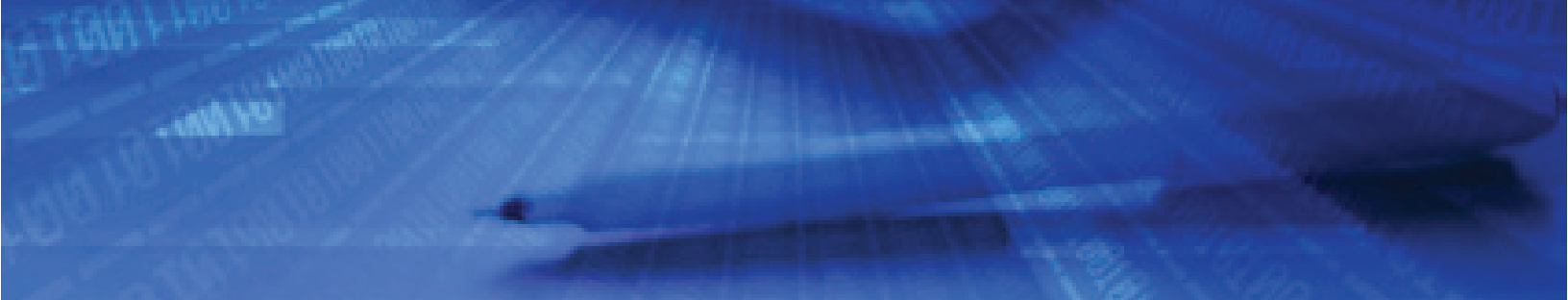
3. Fintech's low-cost model threatening the typically more expensive full-service model of legacy firms.

Clients' requirements change and are always evolving. What was novel a few years ago is now just table stakes. As a result, firms must have agile technology platforms that can rapidly introduce and accommodate change along with experienced systems integrators that can advise on what are the right use cases, how to work with existing legacy environments, and provide a roadmap to help achieve goals for mobile, social, analytics, and big data.

## Changing the Client-Advisor Experience: The Advisor-centric Approach

Taking a user-centric approach to the way firms design, prioritize, and roll out new capabilities on their technology platform is critical to changing the client-advisor experience. For example, the rapid increase of users on social media indicates that firms would need to incorporate this channel into their planning, if they have not already done so. Nearly two-thirds of the advisors in Accenture's Voice of the Financial Advisor Survey say they use social media to interact and communicate with clients.

An advisor-centric approach means creating tools designed for really understanding who the client is. It means giving advisors the tools they require to grow their business, including acquiring new clients, increasing wallet share of existing clients, and using data that is contextual and actionable.



Such data provides advisors with a rich client profile—not simply what they bought and what assets they hold, and more than basic demographic information — but the broader context of who they are and what matters most to them. For example, the mobile client profile would enable access to key information ahead of a client meeting, including the context for the meeting, the personality of the person the advisor is meeting with, and the substance of the conversations the advisor last had with the client. It can also match advisors with clients and prospects, which is becoming increasingly critical as older, more established financial advisors retire.

An advisor-centric approach means keeping not just today's advisors in mind, but also the advisors of the future—and designing a platform that meets everyone's needs. It means taking an outside-in view of how the advisor is not only going to be impacted by the new capabilities, but also the way they actually use and transform those capabilities in practice, rather than the textbook picture of how the capabilities are used.

Firms should do more to equalize the experiences of their younger and older financial advisors or they risk eroding advisors' loyalty—and risk losing clients and assets, too. The Accenture Voice of the Financial Advisor Survey revealed substantive differences between younger and older advisors: fifty-two percent of younger advisors said they have been asked by clients to provide advanced digital tools that their firm does not have (versus twenty percent of older advisors); younger advisors are also more likely to be asked for information about investing strategies in use, including ways for clients to invest on their own (fifty-seven percent versus thirty-seven percent).

Finally, creating an advisor-centric platform allows advisors to personalize the way they engage with wealth management technology. This leads to better adoption, and, more importantly, greater willingness by advisors

to make use of the platform creatively, which leads to more innovation. Even more importantly, having this platform in place will become a competitive advantage to firms as they recruit and retain advisors.

## Summary

Sweeping demographic and technological changes are transforming wealth management. Firms need to move quickly or they risk losing market share—both in attracting, retaining and growing clients and attracting and retaining advisors and improving advisor performance.

Here are some key strategies for management to consider:

- Design for human beings, working from the outside in. This involves acknowledging that not all clients are alike. Those variations extend beyond the obvious and observable (such as young and old, or married or single). Identify items that are specific to them and how wealth management can work towards addressing their deepest requirements.
- Work together with clients to create a personalized financial plan that helps meet those requirements and have regular checkpoints to measure and evolve the plan.

Furthermore, do not allow yourself to be encumbered by legacy technology:

- Provide your clients with the digital tools they need, including tiered self-service models where clients can invest on their own, and arm your advisors with the same technologies such as social and mobile that their clients take for granted.

- Understand your firm's unique strengths and make sure to uphold your key differentiators as you evolve to a customer- and advisor-centric market approach.

Above all: don't become wedded to your old technology. Today's technologies and the innovations of tomorrow are a tremendous opportunity to capitalize on the growing market for personalized financial advice. ■

## Special thanks to our contributors:



**Kendra Thompson**, North America Managing Director, Accenture Wealth Management Lead. Kendra has over 17 years of broker dealer and advisory industry experience.



**Rohit Mahna**, VP and GM of Financial Services, Salesforce. Rohit is General Manager of Financial Services at Salesforce, leading the company's strategy in the Wealth Management, Banking and Insurance sectors.

## Accenture

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services and solutions in strategy, consulting, digital, technology and operations. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries and all business functions – underpinned by the world's largest delivery network – Accenture works at the intersection of business and technology to help clients improve their performance and create sustainable value for their stakeholders. With more than 375,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture drives innovation to improve the way the world works and lives. Visit us at [www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com).

## Salesforce for Financial Services

From Main Street banking to Wall Street investing, the financial services industry is being disrupted by digital, social, and mobile innovation. Salesforce helps companies switch from defense to offense with ever-more personal customer interactions. Visit [www.salesforce.com/industries/financial-services](http://www.salesforce.com/industries/financial-services) to learn how to supercharge advisor productivity and create client relationships that last generations.

---

<sup>1</sup> Listening to the Voice of the Advisor, <http://www.accenture.com/us-en/insight-voice-financial-advisor-wealth-management>