

The importance of the human touch in an AI-driven world: how the rise of AI is reinforcing the need for trusted and personalised service in private banking

By Jean-Philippe Bersier, Director of Sales & Marketing, ERI

At a recent roundtable of financial services executives, it was no surprise that Artificial Intelligence (AI) dominated the agenda. Yet the conversation revolved as much around celebrating AI's potential as it did about navigating the complex emotions it stirs: excitement, fear, optimism, and scepticism. Particularly in private banking, an industry historically built on personal relationships and trust, AI's rise is not just a technology story. It is a call to reinforce the human touch in an increasingly digital world.

The AI surge: personalisation and changing client expectations

Today's private banking clients are not like those of the past. They are digitally savvy, increasingly self-directed, and expect more relevance, responsiveness, and personalisation in their financial interactions. Personalisation, powered by AI, has emerged as the new competitive battleground.

Clients now demand investment information tailored to their goals and preferences, delivered through intuitive, accessible channels. In a world where clients can access nearly the same data and simulations as their advisers, how can private banks maintain an edge? The answer lies in reimagining the role of the human adviser, supported by AI rather than replaced by AI





The AI adoption gap: varying speeds, common challenges

While some wealth management firms are forging ahead with AI, others, particularly smaller private banks, are lagging behind. Budget constraints, limited resources, and fierce competition for AI talent all pose significant barriers. Moreover, the costs associated with the massive processing power AI requires cannot be ignored.

Despite these hurdles, the industry is moving. Cloud adoption in Switzerland is gaining traction, although not without hesitation. The early use cases in private banking remain experimental, and no industrialised solutions have yet emerged. Still, the pressure to evolve remains relentless.

Human advisers: from defending the role to redefining it

A few years ago, the debate centred around whether technology would erode the role of the adviser. Today, the narrative has matured: AI is seen as an enabler of greater efficiency and deeper client engagement.

Bill Gates' vision of AI transforming every industry is materialising, but in private banking, a world of historically fragmented players and highly personalised service, the transformation demands nuance. Private banks must balance technological innovation with the preservation of human relationships at their core.

AI is not an optional extra for private banks. It is essential, both for empowering relationship managers (RMs) and enriching client experiences. AI can free RMs from routine tasks, allowing them to focus on higher-value activities that further enrich the client experience, deepening their brand loyalty and trust. However, advisers must also be prepared and able to justify AI-driven recommendations to clients and regulators alike, requiring a new level of expertise, transparency and system capabilities.

The rise of self-directed clients: redefining Advisory roles

AI tools are democratising financial insights, giving clients real-time data, simulations, and risk analyses at their fingertips. This empowerment is driving a rise in self-directed investing, fundamentally shifting the Advisory landscape.

RMs must evolve from product pushers to strategic advisers, focusing on multi-generational planning, emotional intelligence, and complex wealth structures, areas where AI cannot fully replace human judgment. Clients still crave empathy, understanding, and reassurance, especially during major life transitions like retirement, inheritance, or liquidity events.

The future of private banking lies in the "human + machine" model: combining AI's speed and precision with human trust, empathy, and contextual understanding.

Building a truly customer-centric hybrid model

In the hybrid AI-human environment, customer-centricity must therefore be redefined. Clients expect seamless digital experiences that still feel deeply personal. They want their banks to know them, not just through data points but through real understanding.

AI enables hyper-personalisation at scale, providing tailored insights, proactive nudges, and contextual communications based on real-time behaviours and financial signals. Armed with AI-driven insights, RMs can engage clients in more timely, relevant, and value-rich conversations.

Omnichannel orchestration will be vital. Clients expect consistent, intelligent service whether they interact through apps, video calls, or face-to-face meetings. The back-end must enable the front-end, ensuring that every touchpoint reflects a unified understanding of the client.

Yet no matter how sophisticated AI becomes, emotional intelligence remains irreplaceable. In the more significant moments in life, only a human adviser can provide the depth of connection clients need.



Navigating generational differences

The relationship with AI is not uniform across demographics. Older generations may remain more wary of tech-driven services, while younger clients expect and embrace AI-enabled convenience.

RMs must continually adapt, reinventing their roles to stay relevant to a diverse client base. Crucially, they must position AI not as a cold, impersonal force but as a tool that augments their ability to provide better, more customised service.

Depending on the demographic of the client, the adviser needs to be able to leverage AI to its fullest in the best interests of the client, and be able to explain decisions and recommendations made, or, with more technology-savvy clients, be able to demonstrate to the clients themselves how to best use the AI tools and technologies they may have access to.

Responsible AI: balancing innovation with governance

Private banking is a heavily regulated industry, and the adoption of AI brings new governance challenges. Controlled experimentation is the norm today, as banks tread carefully to balance innovation with regulatory compliance.

AI governance is becoming a board-level priority. Firms are embedding AI oversight into existing risk and compliance structures, implementing model validation, explainability protocols, and robust data governance frameworks to ensure responsible AI use.

Transparency, auditability, and ethical considerations are critical. Training programs are also being rolled out to upskill teams on AI risks and best practices. Banks must ensure AI-driven decisions are free from bias, protect client secrecy, and secure data integrity, while still fostering innovation. Finding this balance is essential. Suffocating innovation would be as damaging as unbridled experimentation.



The critical role of infrastructure: data, security, and integration

In an AI-driven world, data is the fuel that brings profound implications for broader bank infrastructure. Secure, high-performing, dependable systems are not just "nice to have" but mission-critical.

Firms like ERI understand that the success of AI initiatives hinges on integrating intelligent front-end experiences with automated, resilient back-end processes. Modernising legacy core systems, embracing modern technology languages, and ensuring seamless data flows will be crucial.

AI will further accelerate digitisation and automation, optimising operational efficiency and responsiveness. Without strong foundations, personalisation efforts will falter.

Conclusion: The future belongs to those who combine intelligence with empathy

Private banking is at a turning point. AI is reshaping the industry, but the human touch will define its future. The RM of tomorrow will be an augmented adviser: technologically empowered, but deeply human.

Clients will gravitate to firms that offer the perfect blend of cutting-edge digital experiences and authentic, trusted relationships. Success will not come from technology alone, but from how well private banks use technology to deepen their understanding of clients, anticipate their needs, and deliver experiences that feel as personal as they are intelligent.

In a world increasingly driven by algorithms, the institutions that put human connection at the heart of their AI strategies will lead the way.



Jean-Philippe Bersier

Director, Sales & Marketing

info@olympicbankingsystem.com



Discover more about **ERI**

[Read more](#)