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Clearstream and Proxymity launch digital general meeting service

Digital investor communication platform Proxymity has expanded its partnership with Clearstream to launch a digital general meeting announcement solution in Germany and Luxembourg.

The service is expected to go live by the end of the year and will use Proxymity's Vote Connect, the digital proxy service powered by Proxymity's investor communications platform, to deliver to markets.

Communication between issuers and investors has historically been managed through a range of different mechanisms and information sources. This has resulted in delays and a fragmented process for intermediaries and investors, according to the firms.

The central platform aims to automate issuer investor communication to resolve these issues and facilitate improved proxy voting and corporate event communications for all parties involved.

It is designed to enable issuers and their issuer agents to improve corporate event communications between intermediaries and investors by publishing "golden record" general meeting announcements directly to the issuer central securities depository (CSD), and onward to intermediaries and investors.

CEO of Clearstream Securities Services Sam Riley says: "At Clearstream, we are constantly striving for new and innovative services for our clients, making it easier for them to conduct their business smoothly and efficiently around the world.

"In expanding our partnership with Proxymity, we are delivering on this ambition once again, using digital technologies that are leading the way in compliance and best practice."

CEO of Proxymity Dean Little adds: "We are thrilled to continue our partnership with Clearstream, further expanding our digital investor communication platform into the German and Luxembourg markets.

"This collaboration will revolutionise the way issuers communicate their corporate events, ensuring compliance and enhancing efficiency in the proxy voting process. We look forward to making a positive impact on these strategically important markets and continuing to drive innovation in issuer to investor communication." ■

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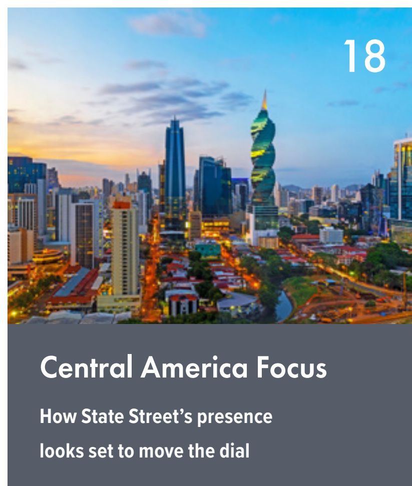

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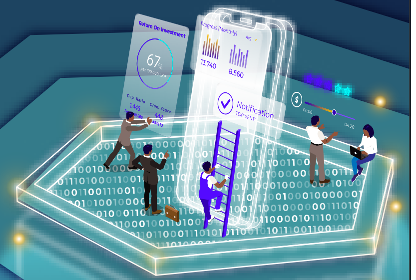

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TrustQuay and Viewpoint merger granted regulatory approval

The merger of TrustQuay and Viewpoint has now received regulatory approval and is expected to advance to completion, according to the participating companies.

The deal, which was announced in February, brings together the complementary expertise of the two companies, supporting over 660 customers in Europe and the Asia Pacific across wealth management, trust, corporate and fund services.

This will enable the business to deliver greater product innovation, scale up its professional services, customer support and business development, and accelerate growth across all key product areas, according to a statement by the two companies.

With headquarters in London, the combined organisation will employ 270 people across 12 office locations including Jersey, Guernsey, the UK, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia.

The deal is backed by investment from Hg, a specialist investor in European and transatlantic software and services businesses, and BPEA EQT, the Asian private equity arm of EQT, a purpose-driven global investment company focusing on active ownership strategies.

On completion, Rolf Heemskerk, currently CEO of Viewpoint, will become chief investment officer of the combined group and member of the board of directors.

Keith Hale, Group CEO of TrustQuay and Viewpoint, comments: "Our newly combined product capabilities, development scale and global customer service coverage mean we will be able to offer our customers and the wider market a unique range of solutions.

"By joining forces, our offering now spans entity management, practice management, regulatory compliance, workflow and digital capabilities for corporate services providers, trust administrators, law firms and trust banks, as well as an increasing product set for global corporates and fund administrators."

Heemskerk says: "TrustQuay and Viewpoint are a highly complementary fit, from product capability and geographic coverage through to organisational strength.

Standard Chartered completes Hong Kong acquisition of RBC Investor Services Trust

Standard Chartered has completed its acquisition of RBC Investor Services Trust Hong Kong, rolling the acquisition into a newly approved entity named Standard Chartered Trustee (Hong Kong) Ltd.

Its existing trustee capabilities in Hong Kong, which service retail funds, will also be merged into SC Trustee over time.

SC Trustee is a subsidiary of Standard Chartered Bank Hong Kong and serves as an approved trustee authorised by the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority.

The strategic acquisition of RBC Investor Services Trust Hong Kong is designed to widen the securities services capabilities and client base of Standard Chartered Bank Hong Kong and to extend its trustee activities for mandatory provident fund (MPF) schemes and occupational retirement scheme ordinances in Hong Kong.

SC Trustee will provide a full suite of fund services, including trustee, custody, fund administration and transfer agency.

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Simon Kellaway, Standard Chartered's global head of sales and regional head of financing and securities services for Greater China and North Asia, has been appointed as chair of SC Trustee.

Christy Cheng will become chief executive, having previously served as head of CCB (Asia) Trustee Company Limited.

Kellaway says: "Standard Chartered is keen on investing in growth opportunities and expanding its offering to meet clients' needs.

"With Standard Chartered's deep knowledge of the local market, we look forward to extending our trustee services for MPF schemes and other eligible investment funds to additional clients, and bolstering our capabilities in Hong Kong."

TMX collaborates with Clearstream to release new Canadian collateral management service

TMX Group has announced that it will launch a new collateral management service for the Canadian market that is scheduled for Q3 2023.

The collateral solution, named the Canadian Collateral Management Service (CCMS), has been built through collaboration with Clearstream Banking SA, Clearstream's ICSD and licensed banking arm based in Luxembourg.

TMX Group, which operates the Toronto Stock Exchange and key Canadian post-trade infrastructure including the Canadian Depository for Securities (CDS), has worked with Clearstream to bring together their collateral management and post-trade expertise, delivering improved optimisation and collateral mobilisation to the Canadian market and offering domestic triparty repo in this location for the first time. The first phase of CCMS will offer collateral management benefits to participants in Canada's secured funding market, delivering greater automation and processing efficiency across the SFT lifecycle.

TMX indicates that this will also set the Canadian market in a better position to move to T+1 settlement in May 2024, supporting greater collateral mobility at lower operational risk.

Commenting on the forthcoming CCMS release, TMX Group CEO John McKenzie says: "We are pleased to work together with Clearstream, a world-leader in post-trade infrastructure and securities services, in pursuit of a customised mobility and liquidity solution for Canada's secured finance industry.

"In keeping with our purpose to make markets better and empower bold ideas, TMX is firmly committed to seeking out innovative, workable solutions to client challenges and strengthening Canada's financial ecosystem.

"The new CCMS will enable our clients to better meet the continuously evolving collateral requirements of today's markets, while supporting the growth of repos as an investment product for Canadian buy- and sell-side clients," adds McKenzie.

Sam Riley, CEO of Clearstream Securities Services, comments: "It is at the heart of Clearstream's collateral management strategy to provide our clients with reliable and scalable state-of-the-art solutions that reduce the frictional costs of trading through transparency and automation. In TMX, we have found an excellent partner to deliver our proven first-class triparty repo capability to the Canadian market. CCMS will

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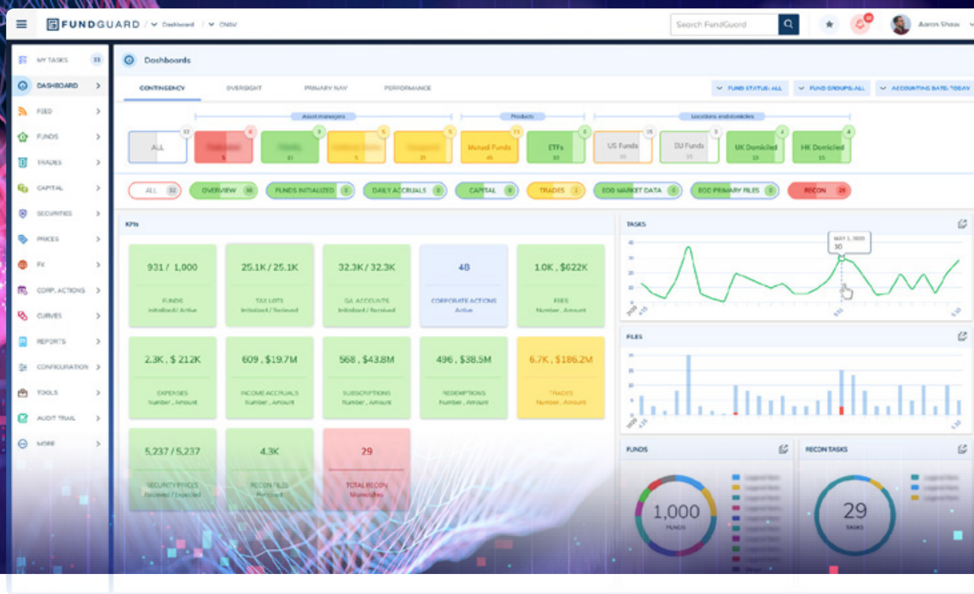

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deliver increased liquidity and efficiency while minimising exposures, supporting the Canadian market on its endeavour to move to T+1.

"Clients will also benefit from Clearstream's industry-leading technology and digital innovation, such as the cloud-based, digital collateral schedule capability known as OSCAR."

HSBC launches new digital services offering

HSBC has welcomed the launch of a new digital services offering that incorporates purpose-built natural language processing (NLP) that aims to enrich the way institutional investors interact with global markets.

AI Markets will have the capability to 'revolutionise' how investors navigate the complexity of financial markets, according to the London- and Hong Kong-based bank.

The NLP engine is designed to enable users to generate financial market analytics, gain access to HSBC's real-time and cross-asset data sets and browse the latest market insights.

Investors can use HSBC Evolve or third-party platforms to access AI Markets; they can also connect directly through an API to gain access to commercial on-demand HSBC market data.

HSBC AI Markets aims to deliver an interface for investors to access real-time pricing and execution. The bank indicates that the nature of the platform will allow AI Markets to constantly evolve with new capabilities being developed.

By customising functionality or using HSBC's machine learning and data science experts, the bank says investors can save time and reduce cost when doing business.

Commenting on the announcement, Richard Bibbey, global head of foreign exchange, emerging markets rates and commodities at HSBC, says: "HSBC AI Markets has been built from the ground up with user experience in mind.

"It is designed to be adaptable, collaborative and dynamic to deliver solutions that fit the specific needs of each client." ■

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David Smith
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Racing ahead

As T+1 looms, Broadridge's David Smith shares his thoughts on what firms should be focusing on

Lucy Carter reports

As we reach the halfway point of 2023, the US transition to T+1 remains one of financial services' most talked-about topics.

David Smith, managing director and capital markets practice lead at Broadridge, has been carefully observing the industry's preparations for the transition — and he has comments, concerns and questions about the progress being made.

Challenges remain

Considering the main challenges around a T+1 implementation in capital markets, Smith highlights cutoff times as a central issue.

"DTCC has a recommended best practice of 11:59pm for issuing stock loan recalls," he explains, "but the majority of firms don't necessarily know until about 2 or 3am exactly what they'll need to recall and borrow." Such a tight turnaround could be a major barrier for the industry, and is "a topic that's being debated across organisations and across the globe".

That's not the only issue hindering T+1 adoption. Harmonisation of data across systems is another problem for firms, Smith says, with increased need for straight-through processing and the removal of manual workflow requiring "a lot of cleanup of data across [companies'] various systems and platforms."

"Trying to get more real-time views into the firm's inventory and trade exceptions is another focus point," Smith continues.

"These are open topics, and solutions are undergoing. The problems are not solved yet, but solutions are coming along. We're making progress."

Operational opportunities

While T+1 requires technological upheaval and the introduction of new methods and strategies, the move is prompting firms to consider other areas of their operations that could do with a revamp.

"There are currently two views on the sell-side," Smith outlines. "There are those looking to do a minimum viable product, just doing the bare minimum to be compliant. Then there are other firms who are using the opportunity to see where they can continue to build greater capabilities and more real-time capabilities across their organisation."

Taking this approach will allow them to "potentially achieve a competitive advantage over their peers," Smith continues, helping them not only to work more efficiently but to get ahead of potential future changes, such as T+0.

"Originally we thought that T+1 was going to be a big catalyst, with everyone doing a 'big bang' overhaul of their infrastructure to become more efficient," Smith states.

However, this has not been the case. Instead, a more componentised approach has been adopted, with companies "solving problems tactically rather than having a bigger strategic change in their overall architecture."

"They're looking for solutions that are going to give them a benefit not just today but in the future," Smith explains. "Firms are looking ahead to T+0, working and building their infrastructure to be able to support that."

On the buy-side, the main challenge is getting essential details to sell-side firms faster, he adds. "They have similar complications, but most of those clients are being serviced by sell-side firms."

For larger firms, any hiccups in implementation can be critical. Being down for any number of hours is a risk during any conversion, and one that companies are understandably reluctant to take. One solution is to adopt the modular rather than 'big bang' approach.

With this strategy, "you still get the overall architecture that you want to build, but you can manage the risk in a much more efficient manner," says Smith. "If you have multiple layers of infrastructure, multiple systems, platforms that have been built over the years — it's easier to take a functional approach than trying to change everything all in one go."

With a 'big bang' approach, all new elements of the transition must be ready at the same time. This can significantly slow down time-to-market, with firms having to wait for development schedules to align before the new system can be implemented.

"If you break it into components, you're going to get their benefits right away," Smith explains. Client experience can be improved, manual processing can be minimised, and disruption is reduced.

On top of that, "you continually increase those benefits as you continue to release modules. Everything can be fully beta tested, making sure that it's ready to support the organisation."

Testing, testing

It's not long before T+1 goes live in the US, with industry testing — "the next big hurdle" — set to begin in August. Where are market participants in their preparations, and are they on track to be ready for go-time?

"It really varies from firm to firm," Smith reports. "A lot are in the middle of their impact assessments and are getting an understanding of what changes actually need to be carried out." But, on the other side, "there are some folks who are really just kicking off," he adds.

Considering whether there are any pain points that the industry has not yet prepared for, Smith reflects that "we haven't seen any major unforeseen issues yet. But the unexpected is always bound to happen — "I think we'll start seeing [new pain points] in testing, if they're there."

In order to be prepared for the transition, there are a number of areas that need to be addressed, Smith affirms. One of these is the continued reliance on manual processes.

"No matter how little or big firms are, it's coming to light that there are a lot of small processes that continue to be done manually." Although each of these activities may only take an hour or so, when you look across the organisation "the breaks in workflow quickly add up", Smith warns.

Additionally, "although the buy-side needs to hand over their trade details and allocations sooner, there's really no incentive for them to do so." A recent DTCC survey found that 60 per cent of buy-side firms were unprepared or had not thought about T+1, assuming that their fund administrators or prime brokers will handle the bulk of the operations. Without penalties or real repercussions for sending late trade and allocation details, and no motivation provided to make any operational changes, this could prove a challenge.

"I think we may see additional rules from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) post-go-live, if fail rates get out of control," Smith predicts. "If not, it may stay as it is and continue to bring down fail costs with no penalties." There's a historical trend of fail rates spiking immediately after a settlement cycle transition, after which things settle down to more expected levels. Allocations and timestamps will be carefully reviewed by the SEC — "but what they do as a next step on that is another question."

Outsourcing the strain

Outsourcing is an increasingly popular option across the industry. "It's a great service for many banks and broker dealers," Smith says.

"One, they're getting industry experts to work on their operations team; and two, they're optimising their efficiency. The industry has a real problem with staffing right now specifically in operational roles. The talent market is becoming increasingly competitive, "and even though things are becoming more automated, you still need expertise."

Third-party services can offer committed resources, expert knowledge and a responsive approach. In the face of T+1, they can also provide round-the-clock services to keep up with after-hours activities. This can be particularly important for smaller firms who don't have follow-the-clock office locations across the globe. Breaks can be researched when they happen rather than being an unpleasant surprise at opening, and companies will be able to match the demands of an increasingly rapid industry environment.

What comes next?

It seems obvious that the next step after T+1 will be T+0. It's widely acknowledged to be on the horizon, and Smith agrees that it's certainly in the pipeline. However, "personally, I'm not sure what the benefits of a T+0 environment really are for the investor," he divulges.

The 'breathing room' that T+2 and T+1 provide allows checks and balances to take place, and works to reduce marketplace risk. "When you move to instantaneous settlements, there's no time for errors. How will regulation work in a T+0 world, given the pace of transactions that would happen? What are the limits, what are the rules of transaction?"

T+0 may not make enough of a difference to end investors to be worth the upheaval, Smith affirms. Rather than increasing efficiency, "it may be a technology solution to fit a need that's not necessarily there."

Whether or not T+0 is right or wrong is up for debate. The fact that T+1 still requires extensive preparations, however, is not. As the US enters the T+1 testing phase later this year, firms will have to stay vigilant to ensure that their operations and technology are up to scratch for the speed of the future. ■

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Navigating the private credit surge

AccessFintech's Cory Olsen outlines the urgency for a modern loan data management system

In today's dynamic financial landscape, the private credit market has experienced remarkable growth and continued expansion is expected. As traditional bank lending channels face challenges, private credit has emerged as a vital alternative for borrowers, offering investors an alternative to broadly syndicated loans (BSLs) and leaving banks out of the equation. However, continued rapid expansion brings concern around the deficiencies in BSL operations and administration, highlighting the urgent need for a modernised loan data management system.

The inherent complexities in the syndicated loan market have brought about significant challenges for users trying to access information. More questions surround how the information is processed and distributed to lenders, agents, trustees and administrators.

This challenge is even greater in the private credit space, where there is less information and a lack of standardisation. However, by embracing digital capabilities and streamlining workflows, industry participants can effectively navigate the complexities of the private credit market.

Private credit is witnessing exponential growth

Since 2008, private credit (also referred to as private debt) has gained popularity; in 2022, it replaced the BSL market as the preferred choice of financing for merger and acquisition transactions. Private credit, like BSLs, is extended to borrowers in the form of floating-rate loans, providing even greater benefits to investors as interest rates rise.

The high capital requirements for banks, and hesitancy to lend to non-investment grade borrowers, provide opportunity for private credit lenders. As highlighted by PwC, non-bank lending now exceeds bank lending in advanced economies.

Private credit lending provides several advantages to the BSL market, including a certainty of funding for the borrower, a smaller group of lenders and less dissemination of information.

It also provides more expertise and knowledge of the sector for lenders and helps to avoid falling recovery rates as documentation becomes tighter. In addition, it better aligns lenders with the capital structure, avoiding lender on lender disputes.

According to US risk assessment firm Moody's, the US $1.3 trillion-dollar private credit market, which has more than $350 billion in dry powder, will exceed $2 trillion by 2027.

This will be driven by the increase in investor demand for the asset class. A 2023 survey by BlackRock Alternatives indicates that more than half of respondents plan to add to their private credit holdings.

Settlement in the BSL markets continues to be a challenge as settlement times continue to be compressed. Wall Street banks have an increasing appetite to trade private credit loans — an asset class that's traditionally 'buy and hold'.

We can only expect settlement times to get worse in a market that has less transparency and automation than many.

Why loan data management technology is essential to the private credit market

The lack of transparency around agent data is a challenge for the entire loan market, but it is especially problematic in the private credit space. Bespoke credit agreements, lack of technology and an overreliance on email and people power make scaling operations in private credit near impossible.

The current surge in the private credit market has illuminated the pressing issues faced by both the BSL and private credit markets. New technology solutions are emerging to fill the void.

In a recent AccessFintech loan working group meeting, comprising 19 institutions across the loan industry, members expressed concern over the operational inefficiencies in the market and what they expect will get worse.

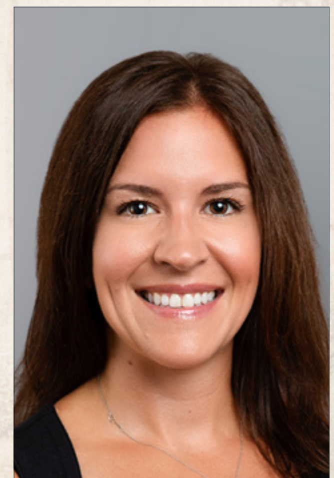
Many pointed to the lack of standardisation of information, an issue for BSL that's not going to change any time soon and which is only amplified when applied to private credit. Participants agreed that "better technology infrastructure was a desired outcome".

New technology solutions need to tackle various challenges. Significant email traffic is involved in the process of distributing, requesting and confirming data, which can lead to inefficiencies and delays. In addition, an absence of data reconciliation often results in discrepancies between parties, leading to additional work and complications.

Some of the issues the market struggles with include:

- **Reconciling with outsourced third-party agents:** This is especially challenging for the buy-side when dealing with multiple agents. It creates a lack of standardisation that leads to difficulty in normalising data and keeping accurate position data.
- **Information workflow:** Efficient information workflow is crucial for streamlined loan administration. However, obstacles arise due to the manual nature of loan set up, amendment processes and lifecycle event distribution. Communication of information predominantly relies on manual workflows and non-standard communication methods like email, fax and PDFs which can further impede efficient processes.
- **Infrequent confirmation of positions and other information:** Typically, a lender will only know their position by looking at a notice they receive (via fax or email) once a quarter. This means they're not always clear if they're in 'lock step' with the agent, something which is especially troublesome if secondary trading picks up for private credit.
- **Obtaining lifecycle event information:** Accurate information is essential for effective loan data management. However, the manual nature of loan servicing and the lack of standard processing pose challenges. Automating data collection for underlying credits, including amendments, is crucial but currently lacking in the market. ■

> *"The current surge in the private credit market has illuminated the pressing issues faced by both the BSL and private credit markets. New technology solutions are emerging to fill the void"*



Cory Olsen
Head of loan products
AccessFintech

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Ready for growth

Brian Bollen takes a look at the current state of the Central American market and explains how State Street and Apex's presence looks set to move the dial

Central America includes Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Belize. From the mid-19th Century, Central America's economy was based on the production of coffee and bananas for export. During the 1960s and 1970s, vigorous economic growth was followed by national debt and low or negative economic growth rates.

Near the end of the 1990s the region's economies rebounded, and the privatisation of companies and utilities, along with the spread of free trade, aided growth.

By the end of the 20th Century, Central America's governments had attempted to revitalise the economy by fostering the diversification and expansion of non-traditional exports and free-trade zones. Assembly plants (known as maquiladoras) were established to encourage the expansion and decentralisation of manufacturing.

By the mid-2000s, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica had entered into the Central America–Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) with the US. However, growing diversification in the region has not provided an equitable distribution of wealth. Manufacturing is sharply hampered by Central America's limited mineral and energy resources, and by the restricted size of its market.

The main trading partners outside the region are the US, Canada, and western Europe. Against this backdrop, opportunities exist for providers of financial services.

State Street, for instance, announced on 10 May that it had been appointed to provide custody services for Bladex, the Panama-based multinational bank. Bladex was established by the central banks of 23 Latin American and Caribbean countries to promote foreign trade and economic integration in the region.

Commenting on the news, Marcia Rothschild, State Street's head of Latin America, said: "We are pleased to announce this mandate with Bladex as we continue to expand our custody capabilities across the region, furthering our goal of supporting leading institutional clients in Latin America. We look forward to partnering together to help Bladex generate and sustain growth to meet their investment objectives."

In 2022, State Street announced the opening of a new office in Chile to help the firm serve and support institutional clients in the region, and also launched an integrated fund trading solution along with a custody offering for clients in Mexico.

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Additionally, in 2021, the firm announced that its Brazilian bank, Banco Comercial (formerly known as Natixis Brasil S.A. - Banco Múltiplom), began offering full foreign exchange trading capabilities and sales operations.

Also looking to the future is Georges Archibald, chief innovation officer and regional managing director of the Americas at Apex Group. He says: "Following [Apex's] recent expansion in South America via the acquisitions of BRL Trust DTVM and Modal Group's alternative fund administration business in Brazil, we are now turning our attention to consider further opportunities for growth in the Central American region. We will continue to evaluate strategic growth opportunities in Central America, both via acquisition and organic growth avenues, as we seek to support our clients with our single-source solution, available globally and via teams of local experts."

Oil we need

Stretching the geography slightly, we cannot resist casting an eye over Guyana, which saw its financial future transformed by the discovery of high-quality crude oil in the Stabroek block in May 2015, by a consortium led by ExxonMobil. According to Norway-headquartered independent research company Rystad, the Guyanese government could reap the rewards of this find with cumulative revenues totalling US $157 billion by 2040.

An International Monetary Fund working paper published in November 2022 notes that oil production presents a momentous opportunity to boost inclusive growth and diversify the economy by providing resources to address human development needs and infrastructure gaps.

At the same time, it presents important policy challenges relating to effective and prudent management of the nation's oil wealth, including decisions to appropriate monetary policy and exchange rate frameworks, as Guyana transitions to a major oil exporter.

The main downside risks to the outlook are volatility in global oil prices, a slowing global economy, or rapid increases in investment, which could lead to macroeconomic imbalances.

It hardly requires the powers of Sherlock Holmes to deduce that few countries would turn down the opportunity to be faced with such a downside, given the long-term benefits that the discovery will likely accrue.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a success story in terms of development, according to The World Bank. It is considered an upper middle-income country, and has seen steady economic growth over the past 25 years.

This growth resulted from an outward-oriented strategy, based on an openness to foreign investment and gradual trade liberalisation. Costa Rica was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Fiscal consolidation efforts launched in 2018 were interrupted as revenues collapsed amid increasing expenditures needed to mitigate its impact.

Gross domestic product recovered 7.8 per cent in 2021 after the largest drop in four decades in 2020. A strong rebound in manufacturing, particularly of medical equipment, and a gradual recovery in services and agriculture lifted gross domestic product (GDP) above pre-crisis levels.

Growth is expected to moderate to 3.3 per cent in 2022 and 2.7 per cent in 2023, reflecting the challenging external environment, but should rebound to around 3.1 per cent in 2024, supported by Costa Rica's dynamic exporting sectors.

Panama

From 2014 to 2019, Panama's GDP grew at an average rate of 4.7 per cent. In 2020 it contracted by 18 per cent, the most significant drop in the region due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The economy is projected to grow at 5.7 per cent in 2023 and 5.8 per cent in 2024. The fiscal deficit is projected at 3 per cent and 2 per cent of GDP in 2023 and 2024, respectively. Growth is driven by the services sector, led by wholesale and retail trade, transportation, storage and communications. However, construction, manufacturing and mining have also played an important role in Panama's economic growth.

Business Panama Group, meanwhile, likens the centre of modern Panama City to a miniature Manhattan, saying it has "the most modern and successful international banking centre in Latin America".

It notes that the International Banking Center offers investors over 67 banks from more than 32 countries around the world, especially from Asia, Europe and the Americas.

Nicaragua

Between 2000 and 2017 Nicaragua's economic growth averaged 3.9 per cent, led by domestic demand fuelled by remittances and Foreign Direct Investment, according to the World Bank.

A small, open economy that depends on agriculture and light manufacturing, Nicaragua has not been able to further boost growth and per capita incomes as low human capital, large infrastructure gaps and a weak institutional and business environment undermine its long-term growth.

The socio-political crisis of 2018-2019, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic and two major hurricanes in 2020, resulted in a cumulative GDP loss of 8.7 per cent, while poverty ratcheted up to 16 per cent by end-2020.

Despite high inflation, global headwinds, and the damage caused by Hurricane Julia, GDP is expected to have grown by 4 per cent in 2022, driven by robust private consumption fuelled by remittances and net exports.

Remittances expanded sharply during 2022, reaching about 22 per cent of GDP due to a spike in emigration.

In 2022, the average annual inflation rate in Nicaragua surged to 10.5 per cent — the highest among Central American countries and more than double the average inflation rate over the past decade. Growth is projected to moderate to 3 per cent in 2023 amid fiscal consolidation, slowing external demand and elevated inflation.

Honduras

Honduras has a small, open, predominantly agricultural and informal economy, according to the World Bank. Given its strategic location, solid industrial base, ample productive resources and young and growing population, the country has the potential to accelerate its economy in an inclusive and resilient manner.

From 2010 to 2019, the average annual growth of the GDP in real terms was 3.1 per cent, driven mainly by remittances-fuelled private consumption. In 2018 and 2019, the country's economic growth was 3.8 and 2.7 per cent, respectively. This growth was above the average for Central America (1.9 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (0.9 per cent).

The Honduran economy rebounded strongly by 12.5 per cent in 2021, reaching the pre-crisis level of GDP. Annual real GDP expanded by 4 per cent in 2022, according to preliminary data from Honduras's Central Bank. The growth forecast for 2023 is 3.5 per cent.

Guatemala

Guatemala is an upper middle-income country and the largest economy in Central America by population and economic activity, says the World Bank. The country has experienced a stable pace of growth (3.5 per cent on average over the 2010-19 period), underpinned by prudent fiscal and monetary management and macroeconomic stance.

Following a large rebound in 2021 (8 per cent), Guatemala's economy grew by an estimated 4 per cent in 2022, driven by private consumption, investment and public consumption. GDP growth is expected to slow down to 3.2 per cent in 2023.

El Salvador

The smallest country in Central America, El Salvador has experienced modest economic growth in recent decades, the World Bank says. Annual GDP growth exceeded 3 per cent only three times between 2000 and 2022.

El Salvador's economy grew by 10.3 per cent in 2021, after a fall of 8.2 per cent in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while growth moderated to 2.8 per cent in 2022 and is expected to average 2.3 per cent in 2023. In the medium-term, GDP is forecast to converge to 2.1 per cent, above historical averages, on the back of private consumption, public investment and tourism.

Belize

As a small open economy, Belize relies considerably on international trade and has a limited supply of labour and capital. Belize has great economic opportunities, but as is the case in many Caribbean countries limited availability to social and economic data prevents the government and prospective investors from making more informed decisions. Greater financial inclusion could help raise savings and investments which would have a positive impact on growth. Sustainable progress will also require prioritising fiscal sustainability. ■

Samir Pandiri leaves Broadridge for Apex

Apex has appointed Samir Pandiri as group president and member of the executive committee. He will report to Peter Hughes, Apex founder and CEO.

In the role, Pandiri will be responsible for supporting Apex's growth and overseeing functions including operations, technology product innovation and risk.

Pandiri has more than 30 years of experience in the industry, most recently serving as president of Broadridge International where he was responsible for the company's post-trade technology, global proxy and asset management data and technology businesses outside of North America.

Earlier in his career, Pandiri spent more than 13 years with BNY Mellon, six of which were spent as CEO of the global asset servicing division.

He has held a board member position on the New Jersey State Investment Council since 2018.

Commenting on his appointment, Pandiri says: "With its global presence and local insight, Apex is well-poised for further growth of its data-enabled service offering. I look forward to working closely with Peter and the executive committee to drive the next phase of its evolution."

Hughes adds: "Samir's global outlook, coupled with his deep technology and operational understanding, make him perfectly placed to drive our continued innovation and expansion. As we celebrate our 20th year in business, we are in a strong position to build on our achievements and embark on the next stage of our growth journey." ■

Stéphane Boujnah has been reappointed as CEO of Euronext for a four-year mandate.

His position as chairman of the managing board has also been renewed. This decision was approved by 98.21 per cent of shareholders in the recent vote. Boujnah has more than 25 years of experience in the financial industry, and has been in his current role at Euroclear since 2015. His tenure was renewed in 2019. Prior to this, he spent five years as head of Santander Global Banking and Markets for continental Europe, served as a managing director at Deutsche Bank and was director of the European M&A team at Credit Suisse.

Commenting on his reelection, Boujnah says: "I look forward to working together with all the teams at Euronext to deliver on our 'Growth for Impact 2024' strategic plan and to prepare the next strategic cycle. We are enthusiastic to consolidate the Group's role as a key player in strengthening Europe's capital markets."

Global capital markets technology firm Delta Capita has appointed Julian Chesser as regional head of APAC.

Based in Singapore, Chesser will lead operations and drive business expansion in the region. As a consulting, managed services and technology provider, Delta Capita offers consulting, managed services and technology solutions, including client lifecycle management and resource augmentation. It is the financial services arm of technology, managed solutions and platform-as-a-service group Prytek. WChesser has more than 25 years of experience in the industry, joining Delta Capita from OSTTRA where he was APAC regional head and a member of the executive committee. Prior to this, he was managing director for APAC with IHS Markit.

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Broadridge welcomes Baris Yildirim

Broadridge has appointed Baris Yildirim as sales director for Northern Europe. Based in Frankfurt, Yildirim will focus on identifying new client opportunities in the region, in addition to driving sales of Broadridge's Capital Markets Solutions in Germany, Austria and German-speaking areas in Central and Eastern Europe including Switzerland.

He will look to accelerate Broadridge's provision of its trading and post-trade technologies to these key markets.

In this role, Yildirim will report to Anthony Brockley, managing director of sales for North Europe.

He joins Broadridge from cloud-based software and service provider Treasury Intelligence Solutions (TIS), where he was a strategic account executive. Previously, he was sales manager at FIS. ■

Commenting on his appointment, Chesser says: "I am delighted to be joining Delta Capita at such an exciting time in its growth story. We have great foundations and people on which to build our consulting and resourcing businesses. I also see huge opportunity across the APAC landscape to extend our existing global managed service capabilities and create new ones."

Joe Channer, CEO of Delta Capita, adds: "I'm very pleased to have Julian join the Delta Capita executive team, demonstrating our commitment to global business growth and the importance of the APAC region. Julian's extensive experience of capital markets infrastructure and the Asia region will be critical as we grow existing business lines and deploy capital to acquire non-strategic client technology assets and targeted M&A opportunities."

Val Mathews, chief customer and operating officer at The Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) will step down from her role later this year.

Diona Rae will serve as programme director for delivery and risk while a transition plan is established. Mathews will continue to support the organisation until a replacement is found. Mathews has more than 25 years of experience in the industry, and has been with ASX since 2019. Prior to this, she was general manager for customer and digital transformation at QBE Insurance and served as general manager of technology services at Allianz Australia.

Helen Lofthouse, CEO and managing director of ASX, says: "Val has been a critical part of the executive team and her focus and effort over that time has helped bring together the key components of customer, digital delivery, service management and strategy work currently underway across the customer division." ■