Asset Servicing Times

Leading the Way in Global Asset Servicing News and Commentary

ISSUE 382 21 January 2026

PREPARING FOR 2026

From integration and data integrity to automation, resilience, and tokenisation, Broadridge's Tom Burke looks at this year's priorities

MUFG Securities Americas authorised as a primary dealer in the US

MUFG Securities Americas (MUSA), MUFG's registered US securities broker, has announced that it has been authorised as a primary dealer by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York (New York Fed).

As a primary dealer and counterparty in the New York Fed's open market operations, MUSA will participate in US Treasury auctions and provide market information and analysis to the New York Fed's open market operations desk.

The firm says it is dedicated to supporting the stability, liquidity, and efficient functioning of the US Treasury securities market. By strengthening product competitiveness and value chains, MUFG aims to deliver unique value to its clients and meet their increasingly sophisticated and diverse needs.

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J.P.Morgan

50 years of excellence in our Custody business

Solutions that provide access to global investment opportunities through Global Custody, Direct Custody and Depositary Services.

Simcorp publishes study on front office AI use

70 per cent of buy side firms are employing artificial intelligence to support their front office function, according to a study commissioned by SimCorp. This finding marks a sizable increase from last year's report, which said only about 10 per cent of respondents were actively exploring AI tools. It highlighted at the time 75 per cent recognised AI's potential, but required guidance on how to integrate it.

These findings published in the 2026 InvestOps Report, used responses from 200 executives at asset managers, pension funds, and insurance companies worldwide, who were surveyed by WBR Insights on their technology priorities and challenges heading into 2026.

For the first time in three years, achieving competitive differentiation through innovation (55 per cent) has overtaken operational efficiency, (33 per cent) and controlling operating costs (44 per cent) as the leading driver of technology and operational investments for 2026. With AI adoption maturing across investment managers, vendor stability (57 per cent) ranked as the key criterion when evaluating AI solutions for their investment management - ahead of features.

As proprietary data often flows into AI models, firms require that vendors have robust data governance and cybersecurity in place and are seeking partners capable of supporting these requirements.

Another area poised for innovation is within alternative investments where operational complexity and fragmented data often result in limited automation. Over the past 12 months, the number of respondents who believe private markets and alternative investments offer the greatest opportunity for technological innovation has grown by 24 percentage points, reaching 51 per cent in 2026 compared to 27 per cent in 2025.

NYSE develops a platform for trading of tokenised securities

The New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), part of Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) has announced its development of a platform for trading and onchain settlement of tokenised securities, for which it will seek regulatory approvals.

NYSE's new digital platform will enable tokenised trading experiences, including 24/7 operations, instant settlement, orders sized in dollar amounts, and stablecoin-based funding. Its design combines the NYSE's Pillar matching engine with blockchain-based post-trade systems, including the capability to support multiple chains for settlement and custody.

Subject to regulatory approvals, the platform will power a new NYSE venue that supports trading of tokenised shares fungible with traditionally issued securities as well as tokens natively issued as digital securities.

Tokenised shareholders will participate in traditional shareholder dividends and governance rights. The firm says that the venue is designed to align with established principles for market structure, with distribution via non-discriminatory access to all qualified broker-dealers.

Capital.com selects Duco to transform its client and payment reconciliations

Capital.com, a global fintech group and online trading platform has selected data automation platform Duco to transform its critical client and payment reconciliations.

Duco's AI-powered platform will provide Capital.com with a solution to strengthen its control environment and effectively manage the growing volume and variety of data inputs inherent in complex reconciliations, the firm notes.

Additionally, Duco's approach will help Capital.com increase efficiency, aimed at reducing operational risk, and build a foundation to access new markets sustainably across multiple jurisdictions.

Clearstream joins LPEA Luxembourg

Clearstream has announced its membership of the Luxembourg Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (LPEA).

The firm says joining the association reinforces its commitment to advancing the private equity and venture capital industry at both national and international levels.

This membership provides opportunities to share technical expertise, contribute to industry dialogue, and collaborate on best practices at both national and international levels.

Through active engagement, Clearstream aims to strengthen industry standards, foster innovation, and support market development.

This collaboration also enables Clearstream to exchange insights with peers, access valuable resources, and stay ahead of regulatory and technical developments, further enhancing the solutions delivered to clients worldwide.

Pierre Mottion, head of DLT and Strategy at Clearstream Fund Services, comments: "Clearstream's membership in LPEA reflects our long-term strategy to strengthen the private market ecosystem in Luxembourg and across Europe."

Chainlink brings US stock market onchain with equities data

Chainlink 24/5 US Equities Streams, an expansion of Chainlink Data Streams that delivers fast and secure market data for US equities and ETFs across all trading sessions, has been unveiled.

This launch enables decentralised finance (DeFi) access to US equity market data, unlocking the US$80 trillion stock market onchain.

Live across more than 40 blockchains, Data Streams allow protocols to build onchain equity markets, including equity perps, prediction markets, that operate beyond standard US trading hours.

The firm says Chainlink 24/5 Equities Streams was built to address the underrepresentation of US equities onchain. It outlined the reason for this issue as structural: blockchain-enabled trading operates continuously 24/7/365, while US equity markets trade across fragmented sessions during dedicated market hours.

Additionally, most onchain data solutions only provide a single price point for equities during standard trading hours (weekdays 09:30–16:00 ET), creating a gap where onchain markets are unable to reliably replicate market conditions all 24 hours of the day.

These limitations create pricing blind spots, increase risk during off-hours, and make it difficult to build secure, scalable equity-based financial products on chain.

The firm says Chainlink 24/5 US Equities Streams was developed to solve these challenges by transforming fragmented US equity market data into continuous cryptographically signed data streams, allowing traditional markets to operate onchain.

Chainlink 24/5 Equities Streams is being leveraged by protocols such as lighter, BitMEX, ApeX, HelloTrade, Decibel, Monaco, Opinioni Labs, and Orderly.

UK and EU regulators sign CTP oversight MoU

The FCA, Bank of England, and Prudential Regulation Authority have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the European Supervisory Authorities to enhance cooperation and oversight of critical third parties (CTPs) that fall under the UK's CTP regime.

The MoU establishes a framework for coordinating and sharing information on the oversight of CTPs under the UK regime and critical third party providers (CTPPs) under the EU's Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA), including during incidents such as power outages or cyber-attacks.

The MoU aims to manage potential risks to financial stability and market confidence, as well as strengthen international cooperation.

It will also help reduce duplication and regulatory burden on CTPs and CTPPs.

The UK's CTP regime complements similar international standards and is designed to be compatible with DORA.

The agreement demonstrates UK regulators' commitment to cross-border cooperation and strengthening operational resilience to support growth and promote market stability.

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NeoXam renews partnership with CNP Assurances

NeoXam, has announced the renewal of its partnership with CNP Assurances, a Paris-based multinational life insurance firm, for a further seven years.

This extension builds on a collaboration initiated in July 2020 around NeoXam DataHub. The new agreement extends the partnership through 2032 and confirms NeoXam DataHub's role as the group's central repository for securities and ESG data management.

CNP Assurances and NeoXam's continued partnership reflects a shared ambition to expand the scope of NeoXam DataHub to new business areas and use cases, accelerating the group's data-driven transformation.

Key priorities include functional extensions for securities and ESG reference data, cross-functional metadata governance, automated data quality controls, and seamless integration with front-to-back value chains, risk management tools, and regulatory and sustainability reporting frameworks.

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Wyden Infinity partners with Taurus-PROTECT

Wyden, an institutional digital asset trading technology, and Taurus, a provider of enterprise-grade digital asset infrastructure, have partnered between Wyden's institutional trading platform, Wyden Infinity, and Taurus-PROTECT. The integration allows institutions to execute digital asset trades without manual transfers or operational workarounds.

The firm says this creates a smooth, fully automated workflow across connected systems.

Wyden manages execution, routing, and order management while Taurus-PROTECT maintains secure, regulated asset custody. This architecture removes the need to pre-fund exchanges or hold assets at trading venues, significantly reducing operational and counterparty risk. The connector supports near-real-time settlement workflows, including pre-trade checks, post-trade confirmations, and automated treasury movements.

The firm says that this improves execution speed and precision while preserving the governance controls, approval chains, and auditability required by regulated institutions.

By leveraging Wyden's execution and automation capabilities combined with Taurus-PROTECT's secure custody features, banks and brokers can operate digital asset businesses with enhanced reliability, transparency, and efficiency.

Andy Flury, founder of Wyden, says: "Bringing together Taurus-PROTECT's robust custody infrastructure with Wyden's trading and lifecycle automation delivers a compelling combination for institutional clients.

"This integration simplifies complex front and back office processes, giving clients a single, automated pathway from custody to trading and settlement with the transparency and control required at scale."

Ocorian partners with Flagstone International

Ocorian, a global asset servicer to both asset managers and asset owners, has partnered with Flagstone International, a cash deposit solutions provider.

According to the firm, this partnership further enhances its treasury services offering to its growing global client base connecting them to best-in-class foreign exchange (FX) and cash management solutions via regulated, institutional-grade platforms.

Flagstone International's technology simplifies access to a wide range of investment-grade banks for multi-currency deposit products and FX services through one account, Ocorian notes.

The company provides access to a multi-bank deposit platform offering enhanced yields, liquidity management tools, and diversified bank-counterparty risk — all with same-day execution and consolidated reporting.

Marc Krombach, director of global treasury services at Ocorian, says: "Our Treasury Services were created to deliver value, simplicity, and transparency to our clients' banking and FX activities.

"The partnership with Flagstone International ensures we can help clients to optimise their cash and currency strategies and improve outcomes and operational efficiency."

Aidan McAvinue, CEO at Flagstone International, adds: "Flagstone is proud to join forces with a partner of Ocorian's scale and reputation in these markets. Together, we are delivering genuinely impactful technology to global clients.

"Ocorian are exceptional in their focus on client value and trust, and this partnership delivers lower costs, more efficiency, greater yield and spread of bank risk."

State Street launches digital asset platform

State Street has announced the launch of its digital asset platform in a bid to allow the company to bridge the gap between TradFi and digital finance, acting as the connection point between platforms for its clients. The platform is said to include wallet management, custodial, and cash capabilities, in addition to its design intended to support tokenised product development across jurisdictions, covering private and public permissioned blockchain networks alike.

StateStreet also says that the platform supports secure, scalable access for institutional clients, with "enhanced security," alongside operational and onchain compliance controls.

Joerg Ambrosius, president of investment services at State Street, sees the launch as marking a "significant step in State Street's digital asset strategy," and that the company is moving into "practical, scalable solutions that meet the highest standards of security and compliance".

Donna Milrod, State Street's chief product officer, adds: "This platform is built on a client partnership model that ensures ongoing evolution in line with market needs and regulatory expectations, reduces complexity while opening the door to innovation in a rapidly evolving digital financial landscape." ■

What senior asset servicing leaders need to prepare for in 2026

From integration and data integrity to automation, resilience, and tokenisation, Tom Burke, president of Global Asset Servicing at Broadridge, looks at the priorities shaping 2026

The year ahead will present new challenges for asset-servicing operations. As the industry accelerates toward fully integrated, end-to-end platforms, technology is no longer a back office enabler — it has evolved into the foundation of innovation, defining the speed, accuracy, and resilience of every post-trade function. According to Broadridge's global study, 'Broadening Asset Servicing 2025', conducted in partnership with the International Securities Services Association (ISSA) and The ValueExchange, transaction volumes have surged by over 25 per cent year-on-year (YoY) across all activities, with investors experiencing the steepest rise at 31 per cent. Markets are also moving faster and processing cycles are compressing as automation, data integration, and digital connectivity become central to competitive success.

In this context, asset servicers face both opportunities and risks. The firms that adapt the most efficiently will shape the next phase of market infrastructure. The following trends will define and shape the industry in the year ahead:

1 Integration as the foundation

The industry's push toward end-to-end platform integration will only accelerate. Linking custody, fund accounting, tax, proxy, and corporate-actions processes on common systems eliminates silos and manual intervention. Integrated data shortens timelines and gives managers and clients a single, authoritative view of positions and entitlements — essential as servicing volumes climb more than 25 per cent YoY and processing windows shrink to real time under T+1.

2 Data integrity: The new currency of trust

In a data-heavy world, quality is everything. Up to 67 per cent of servicing errors still stem from data-quality issues, and manual errors remain the top root cause overall.

Consistent, validated, and lineage-tracked data underpin accurate reporting, valuations, and regulatory reporting. Firms investing in clean data pipelines and governance frameworks will not only cut error-related losses — which doubled in the US$100,000 to US$250,000 range last year — but also enhance client confidence, turning compliance into a strategic differentiator. Seamlessly linking front, middle, and back office data creates a continuous feedback loop for advisers and investors. Better visibility leads to better decisions and fewer errors.

3 Automation to meet surging volumes

Corporate actions events are expanding in both number and complexity, yet resourcing is rising only marginally — on average just 4-6 per cent compared with over 25 per cent volume growth. Intelligent automation and AI have become the only viable route to absorb growth without inflating cost or risk.

Workflow re-engineering is taking the lead, with an expected cost-reduction return on investment (13 per cent), it now outperforms new-technology spend alone.

“As we begin the new year, achieving operational excellence requires balancing technological advancements with a human-centric approach. Senior industry leaders should view these priorities not as discrete initiatives, but as interconnected elements of a unified transformation strategy”

4 Real-time processing under T+1 pressure

The global move to shortened settlement cycles is forcing financial institutions to adopt real-time event management from capture through to instruction. API-driven workflows, event status dashboards, and exception-based processing are rapidly becoming essential capabilities. The winners will be those who can deliver immediacy and accuracy at scale — giving clients the confidence to act within compressed windows.

5 Preparing for digital assets and tokenisation

Tokenisation is rapidly transitioning from pilot to practical applications. As digital securities and blockchain-based asset registers gain regulatory acceptance, operations teams must be ready to manage onchain events, digital wallets, and potentially new forms of settlement. Investing now in interoperable and adaptable infrastructure will secure a place in tomorrow’s tokenised markets.

6 Embedding ESG and stewardship data

Sustainability reporting is becoming operational, not just strategic. Nearly 70 per cent of survey respondents report growing client demand for integrated ESG and stewardship reporting. Clients expect servicers to manage proxy voting, disclosure, and ESG metrics in one coherent framework. Integrating ESG data into corporate actions processing helps investors align portfolios with policy objectives — and gives operations teams a larger role in stewardship transparency.

7 Sustainability of operations

The journey toward net-zero casts a spotlight on back office efficiency. Paperless workflows, cloud-based processes, and energy-efficient data centers now represent both cost savings and brand value. Demonstrable environmental progress enhances reputation with clients who increasingly consider sustainability integral to vendor selection.

8 Building scalable resilience

Rising transaction loads, cyber threats, and regulatory demands are converging to test every part of the post-trade infrastructure. Scalable architecture, real-time monitoring, and automated recovery have become core to client value perception. Nearly 70 per cent of firms report that resilience and uptime are now directly linked to client-trust metrics — making reliability a commercial asset, not just a control measure.

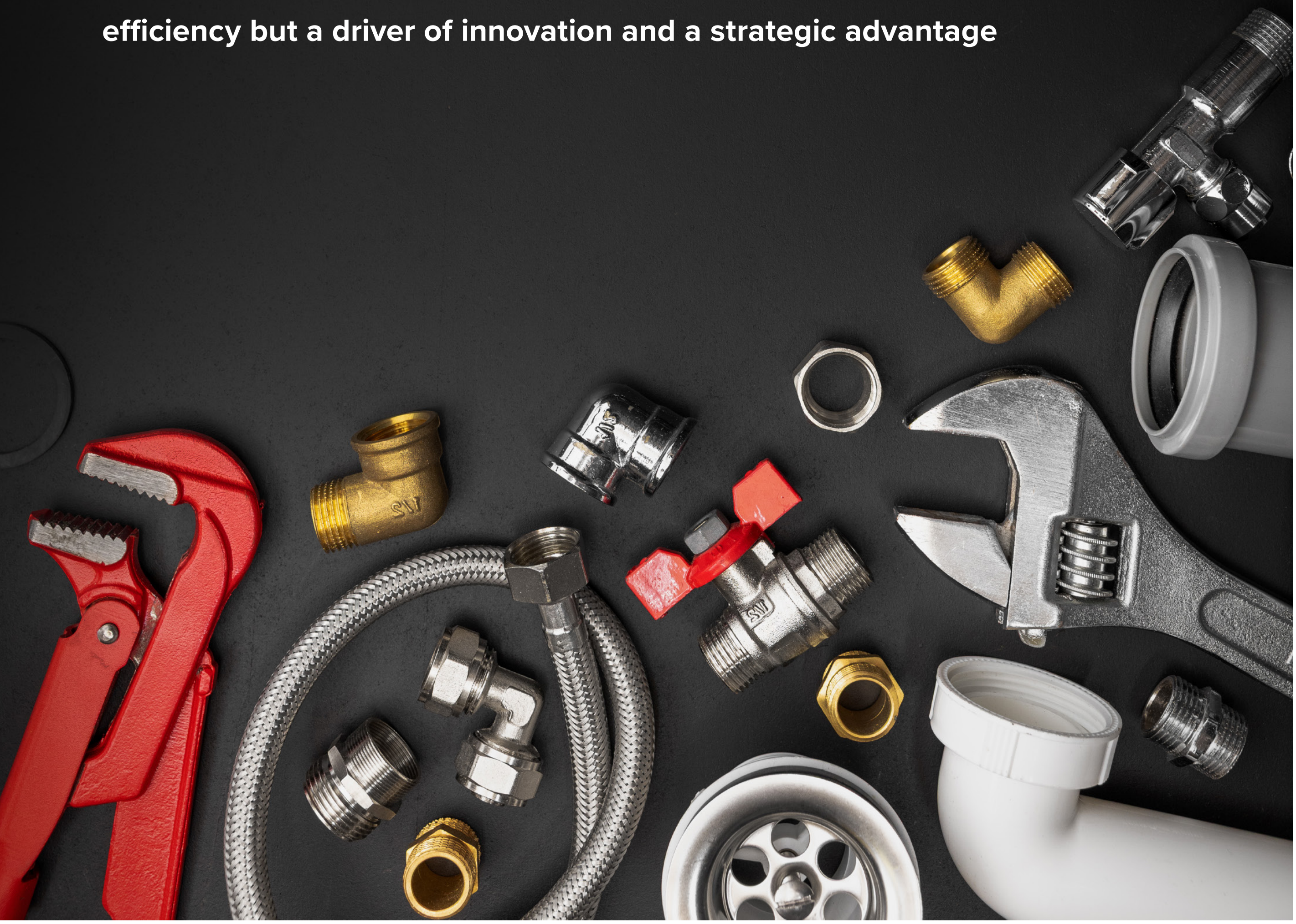
Visualising the future

Overall, the industry is evolving toward a more connected, intelligent, and data-driven model — one where automation, analytics, and interoperability enable faster entitlements, consistent standards, and richer insights across the trade lifecycle.

As we begin the new year, achieving operational excellence requires balancing technological advancements with a human-centric approach. Senior industry leaders should view these priorities not as discrete initiatives, but as interconnected elements of a unified transformation strategy. Leaders and institutions that align technology, processes, people, and purpose around this vision will set the operational standard for the years ahead. ■

Data interoperability as a competitive edge

Tahlia Kraefft explores how the capability to seamlessly integrate, distribute, and use data across fragmented systems in asset servicing is no longer merely a mechanism for operational efficiency but a driver of innovation and a strategic advantage



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Data interoperability has evolved from a back office operational plumbing role to a competitive differentiator for asset servicers, allowing firms to steer quicker decision-making, lower costs, and improve client experiences. As asset servicing volumes increase steeply, with a 25 per cent year-over-year (YoY) rise and 67 per cent of errors are the result of data problems, the capacity to harmoniously connect diverse, legacy, and new digital systems through APIs and cloud is not purely important for business agility but key to a firm's existence and strategic advantage.

It comes against a backdrop of providers moving from siloed, legacy systems to API-driven modular architectures enabling operational alpha and real-time client services.

From operational plumbing to strategic edge

Data interoperability has crucially changed from an IT department requirement to a distinguishing commercial edge, led by the increase of complex multi-provider ecosystems, the requirement for real-time data insights, and strict regulatory demands. Asset servicing faces strong pressure from margin compression, the swift rise of alternative assets, and the need to provide personalised client experiences. Consequently, switching costs, onboarding speed, and data usability have shifted from operational concerns into front-line considerations that affect alpha, cost, and client experience.

Robin Hasson, head of reconciliations solutions, Smartstream, describes interoperability as not just an operational upgrade but a strategic game-changer: "[It is] no longer a technical checkbox; it's the foundation for growth. By moving from managing data to trusting it, asset servicers can accelerate innovation, reduce operational drag, and deliver richer insights to clients. In a market where speed and certainty matter, interoperability isn't just a differentiator — it's a catalyst for sustainable success.

"Interoperability shifts the value proposition for asset servicers. Success no longer comes from simply holding data in custody, it comes from how effectively you move that data and integrate it into a client's broader ecosystem. This change requires a pivot in investment, product design, and governance."

Madhu Ramu, head of product for software and lending solutions, at S&P Global Market Intelligence, says the providers that approach data as a high-performance product, and prioritise transparency and ease of access will be the winners: "Investment priorities are moving away from maintaining closed systems and toward building open, scalable back-ends. True interoperability requires more than just a modern interface.

"It requires an underlying architecture that can handle massive volumes without a proportional increase in headcount. For a service provider, the goal is to improve unit economics by automating the lifecycle of a trade or a corporate action so that data flows without friction. Success is now measured by the ability to scale volume without scaling costs."

Clément Miglietti, chief product officer and chief technology, NeoXam, describes interoperability as a competitive capability that separates leaders and laggards: "Investments in modern data platforms, open interfaces, and governed data processes are prioritised over incremental system patches. Data governance is no longer a back office compliance function; it is the commercial foundation for trust in every number an asset servicer delivers.

"The ability to demonstrate quality, lineage, and control underpins trust with clients and regulators alike. Servicers that embed these capabilities into their technology and operational model are better positioned to adapt to evolving asset classes, regulatory change, and the integration demands of large institutional clients."

Shift in how asset managers select service providers

Asset managers have different criteria for choosing providers now, based on integration ease, API maturity, and data transparency. This marks a shift from relationship-led selection to architecture-led selection. The sector is seeking time-to-integrate metrics, API catalogues and documentation, self-service data access, and event-driven compared to batch data delivery. Asset managers favour providers that plug in rather than require custom builds and they are becoming intolerant of proprietary formats and manual data handling.

Hasson of Smartstream, comments: "Asset managers increasingly treat providers as nodes in a data supply chain. Selection hinges on whether a provider can produce, persist, and exchange rich, structured data that flows end-to-end across cash, positions, instructions and corporate actions – this is to minimise manual reconciliation and latency."

Standards like ISO 20022 are being assessed less as "messaging formats" and more as semantic data models that enable consistent identifiers, attributes, and status propagation across the event lifecycle.

Hasson continues to explain that interoperable providers turn over considerably lower error rates and decrease manual intervention during market spikes. He comments: "As a result, selection discussions now focus on measurable benefits — error reduction, faster decision cycles, and a shift from manual remediation to automated prevention. ISO 20022 adoption and open data strategies are seen as structural solutions. Regulatory pressures and multi-market integration further drive preference for providers with native standards support and proven interoperability tools, making standards maturity a key differentiator in Request For Proposals and renewals."

Miglietti of NeoXam, reflects: "Asset managers are no longer buying isolated services; they're buying into data ecosystems. Interoperability has become a core test of whether a provider can deliver consistent, auditable information across the entire operating model – not just a single output. Firms recognise that fragmented legacy systems and point-to-point integrations create risk, delay reporting and limit adaptability. What matters increasingly is whether a provider supports a unified data lifecycle — acquisition, enrichment, consolidation, and distribution — so that the same controlled dataset can be reused across compliance, performance, and risk workflows."

Ramu spells out that to understand how selection criteria are changing, you must look at the reasons why there is such deep, ongoing frustration with the black box model. He says: "For decades, the industry has been defined by proprietary systems that act like walled gardens. This lack of connectivity creates a 'sticky' relationship for all the wrong reasons. Asset managers are often still held hostage by their providers because the operational pain and systemic risk of moving data are simply too high. Switching providers is not just a business decision, it is an operational nightmare that many firms avoid, even when service levels are failing them.

"That dynamic is fundamentally shifting. We are seeing a significant 'pendulum swing'. For years, the trend was toward total outsourcing to a single service provider. However, many asset managers have found that this creates severe limitations in data availability and quality. Different asset class teams often require greater control and more granular data than a single, broad provider can support. This is why we see firms selectively moving critical processes back in-house. They are seeking out infrastructure that acknowledges this reality, prioritising a hybrid model where a manager can outsource commodity functions but keep the high-alpha, data-intensive processes under their own roof.

"When a firm looks at a provider today, they are no longer just buying a standalone service, they are evaluating a node in their broader network. Managers now prioritise 'velocity of data' and the ability to maintain a hybrid operational model. They want a provider who acts as an extension of their own infrastructure, not a replacement for it."

He offers an example to highlight the complexity of global regulatory compliance, explaining that a trade and transaction reporting system such as Cappitech, cannot operate in a void. It needs a seamless, automated flow of data from front-office execution platforms and back-office accounting systems to make sure that every reportable field is accurate and submitted within stringent regulatory periods according to Ramu. He says if these systems don't communicate with each other, the firm experiences not only operational friction but substantial regulatory risk.

Ramu continues: "If a provider's data is trapped behind a proprietary wall, they are no longer an asset, they are a source of systemic operational risk. Business leaders now demand that their technology spend enables growth and allows for selective control. They are choosing partners who help them scale their internal capabilities, not partners who keep them dependent on a closed loop."

Gus Sekhon, head of product at FINBOURNE Technology, states that data interoperability is increasingly core to how asset managers judge providers: "Firms can no longer afford fragmented data architectures that rely on bespoke integrations and manual processes. These legacy set-ups create friction, limit growth, and hamper portfolio diversification.

"Asset managers are prioritising platforms that can seamlessly integrate a vast array of data sources, making it accessible across the entire organisation. They want data to move cleanly between teams and workflows, with a real-time view that supports day-to-day decision-making and client service.

"With asset managers leaning more on advanced analytics and expanding into new asset classes, they risk being constrained by siloed systems. They're looking for platforms that can support a more data-intensive operation."

Role of open-data architecture in facilitating interoperability

Open-data architecture works as a foundational framework, allowing seamless data exchange, conversion, and usage across different systems and organisations. Through using open standards and splitting compute from storage, it cuts out vendor lock-in, diminishes data silos, and backs real-time, efficient data integration, which is a requirement for analytics, modern business intelligence, and AI.

Miglietti describes open-data architecture as the structural foundation that turns interoperability from an aspiration into a tangible reality. He comments: “A centralised data backbone with modular components for validation, enrichment, and distribution enables firms to ingest reference, market and operational data from diverse sources once — then feed it downstream to reporting, analytics, risk, and oversight tools without repeated reconciliation.

“This design breaks down internal silos and replaces brittle point-to-point connections with governable, reusable data flows, enabling consistency and transparency even as volumes grow and requirements change. The result is a more resilient, extensible operating model where business consumers can trust and act on the same dataset.”

Ramu explains that open-data architecture is moving beyond the simple act of shifting files from one place to another and suggests we are entering a new era of ‘context interoperability.’ He remarks: “For years, the industry focused solely on plumbing: how to move raw data from Point A to Point B. But raw data is often useless without a map to explain what it means. This is why we are shifting toward a Model Context Protocol (MCP) approach.

“Think of this as the difference between receiving a static PDF of a bank statement versus having a live, interconnected feed that understands your entire portfolio. To make this work for a complex event like a cross-border merger and acquisition, we rely on three interconnected concepts: Taxonomy, RDF, and Ontology.

“Taxonomy serves as the filing system. It is how we categorise information so an AI can find it. Instead of seeing a generic ‘corporate action,’ the taxonomy immediately classifies it as a ‘Cash-and-Stock Merger.’ This categorisation tells the system exactly which workflow to trigger. From there, the Resource Description Framework (RDF) provides the grammar. In a standard spreadsheet, a system does not actually ‘know’ the relationship between a parent company and its subsidiary. RDF defines the data as a web of relationships. It tells the system that the ‘Target Company’ is being acquired by the ‘Acquiror,’ and that this specific ‘Shareholder’ holds ‘Tax Lots’ purchased at different dates and prices. Finally, Ontology provides the shared dictionary and logic. It ensures that if one system calls a payment ‘Cash in Lieu’ and another calls it a ‘Fractional Share Liquidation,’ the AI recognises they are the same thing. More importantly, the ontology holds the rules: it explains how a specific tax jurisdiction treats the cash portion of the merger versus the stock portion.

“By combining these, we can use the Model Context Protocol to create a standardised ‘handshake.’ It allows a manager’s AI agents to talk directly to the provider’s data and tools. Instead of just delivering a file about the merger, we are sharing the ‘context.’ We provide the classification, the relationships, and the logic that explains how that merger affects the cost basis and the resulting portfolio position. This eliminates the need for custom coding because every system is finally using the same map. At S&P Global, we see this as a shift from ‘data sharing’ to ‘context sharing.’

“We eliminate the reconciliation burden because the AI, the accounting system, and the reporting platform are all querying the same ‘Golden Record’ through the same machine-readable logic. This allows managers to use AI to react to market shifts in real time, because the infrastructure finally provides the context-aware intelligence that modern asset servicing requires.”

Hasson of Smartstream notes: “Open data architecture ensures standardised objects are treated as firstclass citizens in the storage and processing layers — schemas, catalogs, and lineage — not only at the interfaces. This allows consistent ‘create once, enrich once, consume consistently patterns’ across the event lifecycle which unlocks real-time reconciliation, status propagation, and analytics improvements.

“Open architectures mandate published APIs, portable formats for unstructured and structured data, and failure-aware interoperation. This reduces provider lock in, simplifies cloud migrations, and protects integrity during outages or counterparty delays.

“And with standardised semantics, governance controls — lineage, audit, and accuracy — become programmatically enforceable and measurable, supporting both regulatory commitments and continuous operational improvement.”

Importance of interoperability standards

Implementing interoperability frameworks such as ISO 20022 and Financial Industry Business Ontology (FIBO) are key to ensuring smooth data exchange between diverse systems.

Adhering to these standards carries benefits of decreasing: integration friction, interpretation risk, and vendor lock-ins. Open architectures are built to move past bilateral connections, to enable a mult-vendor ecosystem where various participants can collaborate, shifting away from a rigid system to a flexible, modular environment that uses open stands such as APIs, to allow interoperability.

Migliette states: “Standardisation around common schemas and messaging frameworks is transforming RFPs from generic output checks into deeper inquiries about data governance. Rather than simply supporting multiple file formats, providers are now asked to articulate how they map and normalise data across domains — and how they adapt to evolving industry standards while preserving data integrity downstream. Standards such as ISO 20022 and conceptual vocabularies act as anchors for semantic clarity, and firms are looking for providers whose platforms can ingest, harmonise and distribute data consistently in line with these structures.”

Hasson comments: “Requirements now often specify canonical data classes and relationships rather than only interface endpoints. Vendors are asked to demonstrate lossless transformation and ingestion of data between systems and touch points. RFP sections on integration increasingly mandate open/published APIs, consistent versioning, and semantic stability to avoid brittle, format-specific mappings. Internal policies emphasise selecting providers that prevent lock-in by adhering to open semantics and ensuring portability.”

Ramu reasons that while the word ‘standardisation’ sounds like a dry, back office topic, it is a key lever to unlock artificial intelligence, remarking: “Standards like ISO 20022 and FIBO, alongside frameworks like Data Management Capability Assessment Model, are finally eliminating the ‘translation tax’ that has plagued this industry for years. This is not a new conversation; the industry has been talking about these standards for decades. However, we have finally moved from theoretical discussion to massive, practical success stories that are changing the way firms buy technology.

“Today, clients are pushing for a standardised implementation model within their data platforms to promote ‘explainability’. They want to see exactly how a data result was achieved and understand the logic behind the transformation. This is where FIBO and DCAM become critical. They provide the schema ontology and the governance controls that ensure data quality across multiple providers.

“It is no longer enough to just deliver a number; you have to provide the completeness of the data definition at the asset class or transaction level. This allows a manager to trace the lineage of a specific trade or transaction back to its source with total confidence.

“A prime example is the global migration to ISO 20022 for Corporate Actions and securities processing. We have seen incredible success in the US, where the DTCC’s transition to ISO 20022 messaging for corporate actions fundamentally improved the speed and accuracy of the entire market.

“Now, that same momentum is hitting Europe. Euroclear’s adoption of these standards for corporate actions is a massive step toward global harmonisation.

“Unlike old legacy formats, ISO 20022 allows for incredibly rich, structured data that captures the full complexity of an event.

“When a provider sends a corporate action notification, it is an ontological package that understands the specific tax implications, the election deadlines, and the resulting impact on the portfolio.

“When we talk about AI, this distinction is critical. AI is only as good as the data it consumes. If you feed a large language model ‘flat’ or unstructured data, you get hallucination and unreliable outputs. But if you feed it ontological data from a shared schema that understands the inherent relationships between an issuer and a complex corporate event, you get true intelligence.

“Standardisation allows managers to move from a ‘trust but verify’ model to one where the data is inherently reliable because it follows a globally recognised, AI-ready schema. It turns a massive pile of data into a strategic knowledge graph.”

As data interoperability becomes the minimum entry criteria for providers, quality, consistency, and usability will be the discerning factor. Ecosystem participation will become more important than traditional bilateral data integration, changing focus from two-party connections to collaborating within larger shared networks.

In an industry where the means to integrate will be as crucial as the standalone service, providers that engage data interoperability as a key business capability, not a mere compliance activity will set the standards for the next era of asset servicing. ■

Speed vs scrutiny

With payments settling in seconds and operating around the clock, traditional AML and CTF frameworks are being pushed to their limits, forcing institutions to rethink how financial crime controls operate in a real-time environment

Zarah Choudhary reports

image by denis_rozhnovsky/stock.adobe.com

As real-time payments continue to expand across global markets, financial institutions are being forced to confront a growing operational tension: how to deliver speed and certainty while maintaining robust anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CFT) controls.

Instant payment rails operate 24/7, settle transactions within seconds and, in many cases, offer no opportunity for recall once funds have moved. While these systems promise significant efficiency gains and improved cash-flow visibility, they also place pressure on AML frameworks that were originally designed for slower, reversible, batch-based payment models.

From batch processing to instant settlement

Real-time payments represent a structural shift in how money moves through the financial system.

Unlike traditional payment methods, which are processed within defined cut-off times and settlement windows, real-time payments are continuous and immediate, enabling funds to be credited almost instantly to the recipient.

For businesses, this immediacy supports improved liquidity management, automated reconciliation and on-demand payments across supply chains, payroll and treasury operations. For financial institutions, however, it also compresses the time available to detect and intervene in potentially suspicious activity.

Historically, AML controls have relied heavily on transaction-level monitoring, with the option for post-transaction review and human intervention. In a real-time environment, those controls must operate differently.

AML controls move upstream

According to Lloyd Sebastian, vice president and segment head for global financial institutions at CIBC Mellon, the rise of real-time payments is fundamentally reshaping how AML and CFT risk is managed.

"Real-time payments are fundamentally changing AML and CFT risk management by shifting controls upstream," Sebastian says. "There is a greater need for robust pre-validation controls at the account and client level, rather than relying primarily on transaction-level intervention after the fact."

That shift is echoed by Rachel Whelan, APAC & MEA head of corporate cash management and global head of payments & transactional FX product management at Deutsche Bank, who says the instant nature of real-time payments has placed client experience firmly at the centre of AML design.

"The nature of real-time payments being instant and having an instant experience embedded into their usage drives the priority of ensuring that the client experience is seamless," Whelan says.

"This is where the need for highly automated AML and CFT checks to be embedded into the experience as early as possible in the flow comes into play."

As a result, firms are increasingly shifting towards preventative rather than in-flight checks.

"Moving to preventative rather than in-flight checks is something we are seeing more of," Whelan adds, noting that the speed and irrevocable nature of real-time payments requires real-time detection, supported by the use of AI tools and enriched data to help identify the parties involved in transactions.

This upstream shift is designed to preserve straight-through processing (STP) and avoid reintroducing the friction that historically slowed payments and tied up liquidity.

Rather than pausing transactions mid-flow, firms are placing greater emphasis on customer risk scoring, onboarding controls and data accuracy before payments are initiated.

That does not mean transaction monitoring disappears. Sanctions screening, AML surveillance and fraud-prevention tools continue to play a critical role, but they must now function within a real-time processing environment rather than around it.

The tension between speed and control

Applying AML controls at real-time speed remains a persistent operational challenge. Identifying and flagging suspicious activity has traditionally depended on time — time to review transactions, escalate alerts and, where necessary, halt settlement.

"In a real-time payments environment, transactions must move instantly and, in some cases, cannot be recalled," Sebastian says. "This creates a tension between speed and control that payments teams must actively manage."

> ***"Our securities markets operate under strict rules involving identity checks, clearing processes and continuous surveillance, which significantly mitigate these risks"***
>
> **Spokesperson, Deutsche Börse**

Whelan points out that this tension is compounded by the fact that many AML processes were never designed for real-time environments.

"The speed of the experience that is underpinned by the real-time payment can't support AML and CFT requirements, due to the nature of such processes being built on legacy platforms that are based on bulk processing and, in most instances, highly manual," she says.

To keep pace with rising volumes, firms are being forced to automate rapidly — while ensuring risk management is not compromised.

The growing use of real-time payments in cross-border contexts adds further complexity, Whelan adds, as regulatory jurisdictions do not always share the same requirements, creating inconsistencies that payments teams must navigate in real time.

False positives and operational pressure

As reliance on automation grows, so too does the challenge of false positives. To mitigate risk in faster payment environments, firms often tighten screening rules, increasing the likelihood that legitimate transactions are flagged.

Poor data quality and overly rigid rule sets can exacerbate the problem, generating high alert volumes that strain operations teams and delay genuine payments.

"Poor data quality and overly rigid rule sets increase the risk of false positives, which can undermine efficiency and strain operational resources," Sebastian says, noting that these pressures are becoming more pronounced as real-time payment volumes grow.

Whelan agrees, particularly in the context of low-value, high-volume payments.

"False positives when dealing with smaller ticket volume throughput are a problem, as this has operational overhead and associated costs that don't correspond to the value of the transactions," she says.

As a result, firms are increasingly focused on "fail-fast" approaches, with greater emphasis on upfront validation and pre-processing controls to reduce reliance on traditional, manual AML methods later in the flow.

Managing alert volumes without weakening controls has become a central focus for institutions, particularly as client expectations for instant payments continue to rise.

Data quality moves to the foreground

Data quality has emerged as one of the most critical enablers of effective AML in real-time payments. While instant payment systems are capable of carrying richer data than legacy formats, inconsistent or incomplete information — particularly static client and counterparty data — can limit the effectiveness of screening tools.

The industry's migration towards ISO 20022 messaging standards is intended to improve transparency, data consistency and interoperability across payment flows. By standardising message structures and data fields, ISO 20022 offers the potential for more accurate screening and monitoring.

However, realising those benefits depends on firms' ability to maintain high-quality data throughout their systems.

Cross-border complexity

The challenge intensifies in cross-border payment flows, where multiple intermediaries, differing regulatory regimes and fragmented data standards can obscure visibility.

Cross-border payments are inherently higher risk from an AML perspective, exposing institutions to sanctions evasion, terrorist financing and money laundering threats.

Regulatory fragmentation across jurisdictions makes it difficult for global firms to apply consistent controls, while the speed of instant payments further compresses the time available for detection.

Correspondent banking relationships add another layer of complexity, as illicit funds can be layered across multiple institutions and jurisdictions, making transaction trails harder to follow.

Infrastructure-level distinctions

Not all parts of the financial system face the same exposure. A spokesperson for Deutsche Börse highlights that AML and CFT risks primarily concern payment systems rather than exchange trading.

"Our securities markets operate under strict rules involving identity checks, clearing processes and continuous surveillance, which significantly mitigate these risks," the spokesperson says, pointing to independent trading surveillance mechanisms that safeguard market integrity.

The distinction underlines how rapidly evolving payment rails present a different risk profile to more established market infrastructures.

Designing AML into payment systems

In some jurisdictions, AML and sanctions oversight are increasingly being embedded directly into payment system design rather than layered on post-implementation.

From a Canadian perspective, Sebastian points to the rollout of modern, data-rich payment infrastructures that align with international standards.

Canada's high-value payments system, Lynx, was fully implemented in 2023, replacing a legacy batch-based platform. Designed with ISO 20022 alignment, the system supports greater data inclusion and interoperability. Looking ahead, the planned Real-Time Rail, expected later this decade, will enable near-instant payments on a 24/7 basis.

"Both current and forward-looking payment infrastructures in Canada have AML and sanctions considerations embedded within their core frameworks," Sebastian says, adding that these controls act as mitigating factors while still allowing markets to realise efficiency and liquidity benefits.

Whelan cautions, however, that embedded AML introduces a different set of risks.

"Embedded AML risk management is being looked at, but it doesn't come without risks," she says. "It introduces a different set of risks that arise from expectations of the parties involved, being a mixture of regulated and non-regulated entities, and not operating under the same level of AML risk management standards."

As a result, she argues, automation and intelligence must be carefully designed to make embedded AML effective without undermining the client experience.

An operational design challenge

What is becoming increasingly clear is that AML and CFT are no longer confined to compliance functions. In a real-time payments environment, financial crime controls are shaping system architecture, data governance and operational workflows.

Automation, machine learning and real-time monitoring tools can help firms scale controls at speed, but they do not eliminate responsibility. Governance, accountability and risk ownership remain critical, particularly as decision-making becomes more technology-driven.

As instant payments continue to grow in volume and reach, AML and CFT considerations are set to play an even more central role in how payment systems are designed and operated.

Speed may be the defining feature of real-time payments — but maintaining control is proving to be the greater challenge. ■

The year innovation drives organisational and infrastructure change in asset servicing

In the second part of our looking forward series, industry leaders predict the core forces and technological developments that will steer the industry in 2026

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Payments

"AI will inevitably play a growing role in automation efforts, but in the near term, its role will be limited to targeted tasks rather than full-scale payment automation where the stakes are high"

Anish Kapoor, CEO of AccessPay

Doing more with less will be at the forefront of corporate finance and treasury leaders' minds as we enter 2026. The macroeconomic backdrop is difficult, which means the drive for automation and finance optimisation will reach new heights. AI will inevitably play a growing role in automation efforts, but in the near term, its role will be limited to targeted tasks rather than full-scale payment automation where the stakes are high. However, AI is not the only technology in town; other solutions also exist to optimise payment flows.

ISO 20022 is an enduring theme. November 2026 will be a milestone month, as Clearing House Automated Payment System (CHAPS) in the UK and Swift begin rejecting payment messages with unstructured addresses. For corporates, this is where a failure to get to grips with ISO 20022 could hit them hard for the first time. Cyber recovery planning for payment systems will also be high on the agenda following prominent cyberattacks in 2025. Finally, cross-border payments will be the hot space to watch thanks to the upgrades to the UK's real-time gross settlement infrastructure (RT2) completed in 2025 and the explosion of activity in the stablecoin space, which could have significant long-term implications for corporate payments.

Nick Jones, Founder and CEO of Zumo

Five predictions that will shape the digital assets sector in 2026

Compliance gets heavy - but unlocks the UK market opportunity at new scale

The UK Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) long-awaited crypto roadmap will start becoming real-world policy in 2026. In comes investment firm style financial services regulation, out goes the offshore business model.

Hot on the heels of the regulator's decision to lift its retail ban on certain crypto exchange traded products (ETPs), it's a watershed moment for the sector. Finally, there will be defined operating rules and the clarity to scale. But it's also the time providers will have to get serious about setting up regulated presences in the UK. Well capitalised, regulated firms will be able to profit from the UK market at a new mass scale, while others retreat.

GBP stablecoins make inroads into the heavily dollarised global market

The GENIUS Act has had a profound impact in the US, with estimates suggesting 99 per cent of the total stablecoin market capitalisation is now dollarised. Spurred into action, the FCA and Bank of England have proposed stablecoin rules that will help UK firms tap into this important growth market.

The FCA has firmly set its stall out with a new stablecoin sandbox targeted towards enabling payments innovation. The Bank of England will offer large-scale stablecoin issuers direct accounts – a step taken neither in the EU or the US in developing their respective regimes – and is preparing now for a future in which stablecoins are used in payments at a systemic scale. These are bold and differentiated moves that point to the closest convergence of private sector digital assets and public finance seen to date. Sterling stablecoins will be fully backed, regulated, and issued onshore. Quiet, boring for some, but ultimately transformative for payments.

Crypto becomes a standardised asset class.

Just a month after the FCA lifted its ban on retail access to crypto exchange-traded notes (ETNs) in October 2025, the London Stock Exchange recorded US$280 million in trading volume, ranking it third in Europe behind Xetra and SIX Swiss Exchange.

ETPs will continue to grow their footprint rapidly in line with developing regulatory certainty. They enable investors to gain increased exposure to the price movements of cryptocurrencies without having to worry about custody, with investments physically backed and held across multiple Big Capital custodians.

Expect to see family offices and private wealth managers getting more involved, making crypto a standard part of the investment portfolio. Recent industry research by broker EXANTE reveals a third of family offices now hold crypto assets, with clearer regulatory regimes in the US, EU, and UK helping to legitimise the sector – and expected to drive allocations ever higher."

Retail apps enter an age of consolidation

Crypto apps will consolidate, driven by increasing regulatory pressures that raise compliance costs and put up barriers to entry. This will result in fewer – but more robust – players.

The maturing crypto market is piquing interest among dealmakers, with fintechs in particular sizing up the sector. In 2025 we saw a number of major deals, including Stripe's acquisition of stablecoin payment platform Bridge and Robinhood's purchase of crypto exchange Bitstamp. Expect to see a spike in M&A activity in 2026, especially among exchanges, brokerages, and other service providers.

The next Coinbase or Revolut? They're already in the market, waiting. Don't be surprised, too, to see these super-apps branching out – into new forms of payments, tokenised asset holdings, and even non-financial applications.

Smart companies will build during the bear market

Historically, Bitcoin's performance follows a four-year cycle, experiencing significant bull runs followed by sharp price corrections. There are typically clear omens for the end of a cycle – presently it's the proliferation of meme coins that suggests people are running out of ideas, while previously non-fungible tokens (NFTs) have been the augur.

The winners in the next cycle will be the firms that have invested and built through the bear market. Revolut, Blackrock, and Binance, for example, have all done it well, launching new products in new markets and deepening liquidity.

Now is the time for ambitious firms to explore the new partnerships that will help them with market entry.

Fund Services

"From an Irish perspective, the new AIFMD II loan origination regime is widely welcomed and a positive development"

Oisin McClenaghan, Partner and Head of the Investment Funds Ogier, Dublin

The assets under management (AUM) of Irish domiciled funds increased by a remarkable 22 per cent in 2024. Significantly, 42 per cent of that growth is attributable to alternative investment funds (AIFs).

Given the comprehensive enhancements to the Irish private assets and alternatives product, and the tax offering currently in train, our expectation is that we will continue to see strong growth in Irish domiciled AIFs in the coming years, as well as continued significant growth in understandings for collective investment in transferable securities (UCITS), including ETFs.

We are currently seeing significant enhancements to our private assets and AIF offering, being delivered by way of the current AIF Rulebook overhaul.

The consultation includes enhanced loan origination flexibilities, Alternative Investment Fund Managers Directive (AIFMD II) alignment without any gold plating, substantial additional subsidiary and downstream structures flexibilities, simplification of AIF financing arrangements, greater side-letter flexibility and regulatory streamlining. This is a significant enhancement to the Irish private assets offering.

From an Irish perspective, the new AIFMD II loan origination regime is widely welcomed and a positive development, introducing new flexibilities into the Irish framework for AIFs directly engaging in loan origination.

The new regime replaces in full the legacy Irish L-QIAIF regime and is being implemented in Ireland without any gold plating. This is also greatly welcomed. Coupled with the compelling advantages of the Irish-US tax treaty, we expect continued significant growth in Irish loan origination AIFs in the coming years.

Both the Central Bank and the Department of Finance deserve credit for their proactive follow-through on the recommendations contained in the Funds Sector 2030 review.

In the last 12 months we've seen significant enhancements to our ETF regime with both ETF share class flexibilities and the significant new ability to disclose portfolio holdings on a quarterly basis instead of daily.

We've also seen additional AIF flexibilities in the context of AIFs guaranteeing third party debts introduced in the Central Bank's AIFMD Q and A and with the current AIF Rulebook overhaul, we will have a substantial enhancement to the Irish private equity and alternatives product offering.

Add the withholding tax exemption for upstream payments to investment limited partnerships (ILPs) contained in the current Finance Bill to the picture and collectively it points to a serious commitment to, and delivery on, the recommendations arising from the Funds Sector 2030 review.

Data services

Michiel Verhoeven, CEO, Xceptor

AI: In 2026, AI adoption will continue to dominate headlines. Yet, without a clear strategy, institutions risk creating a money pit. Firms should ask themselves: "What are our pain points and how can we achieve the necessary outcomes with AI?". Without the right infrastructure, data management, and clarity of purpose, technology is not a magic fix.

For example, AI can drastically reduce time spent extracting information from complex tax documents, and agentic AI could augment productivity further by proactively solving problems and triggering downstream actions. But without addressing inconsistent data formats, firms will face more errors and time spent correcting them, or even financial and non-compliance risks. Issues with data reliability, quality, and flow are common causes of failed AI projects – flawed data creates flawed AI. Firms must invest in platforms that normalise, enrich, and validate data across fragmented systems before scaling AI projects."

Regulation: Regulatory demands across the trade lifecycle will only get tougher. Pre-trade, firms must ensure compliance before execution. Enhanced market data analytics and real-time risk controls are critical for best execution and effective surveillance under regulations like MiFID II and MAR.

Post-trade, the shift to T+1 settlement cycles is magnifying inefficiencies. Issues that once took two days to fix must now be resolved in one. Automation, exception handling, and adaptive rule engines are essential to avoid settlement fails and penalties, while reconciliation and reporting must be digitised and auditable for transparency across the custody chain. With the FCA's warning about readiness for Europe's T+1 deadline (11 October 2027), and lessons learned from the US transition, firms must not delay action.

Tax reporting is also being digitised under mandates like Germany's MiKaDiv (1 January 2027) and the EU's FASTER Directive (1 January 2030). Manual processes will be a huge barrier. Firms must assess their data models, reporting gaps, and custody chain transparency, then automate their tax reporting and compliance processes. This will reduce manual effort and risk, while ensuring readiness for these timelines.

Marc Mallett, Chief Commercial Officer, GoldenSource

Assets under custody continue to rise, but the growth story in private markets is creating a very different operating environment for asset servicers. As managers expand into private credit, infrastructure, and semi-liquid structures like Long-Term Investment Funds (LTIFs) and Long-Term Asset Fund (LTAFs), the underlying operational demands increase sharply. These assets introduce irregular cash flows, bespoke valuation cycles and far more complex data requirements. At the same time, active managers are facing sustained margin pressure, which ultimately flows upstream and puts additional stress on servicing fees.

To keep pace, asset servicers will need to strengthen their ability to support this new generation of private-market products at scale. That means handling capital-call activity, cash-flow schedules, waterfall mechanics, valuation inputs, and look-through data with far greater precision and automation. These workflows were never designed for legacy mutual-fund infrastructures, and administrators are already feeling the strain. The firms that modernise their data foundations will be far better equipped to support managers as private markets continue to broaden into retail and wealth channels.

As these trends accelerate, one of the most promising growth areas for asset servicers lies in becoming the data backbone for clients' private-market expansion. Managers need cleaner, better-structured data to run liquidity processes, oversee valuations, and report exposures across increasingly complex portfolios. Asset servicers that can aggregate, quality-check and warehouse private-asset data — not just the data they produce themselves — will be positioned to deliver higher-value oversight, analytics, and reporting services.

The opportunity is clear: the winners will be the providers that solve the data challenge behind private-market scale.

Clément Miglietti, Chief Product Officer and Chief Technology Officer, NeoXam

The most striking shift has been the real, practical use of AI across private markets. After a decade of talk and tentative pilots, 2025 has been the year firms finally put it to work. A revival in dealmaking and a broader wave of investor activity created the perfect test case, and AI delivered. For a part of the industry known for limited visibility and sluggish reporting, it marked the first time technology genuinely started to close the gap.

The sheer volume and variety of data now flowing through private markets makes manual processing impossible. More documents, more valuation inputs, more noise, and more mismatches in timing have pushed firms toward machine-learning tools that can sift, structure, and reconcile information at scale. AI is becoming the backbone for portfolio-wide data standards, joined-up analytics, and reliable insight that spans both public and private assets.

The momentum is only going one way. With private markets on track to generate more than half of global asset management revenues, firms that hesitate risk being overwhelmed by the data. The next phase will focus on deeper automation, sharper forecasting, and a level of transparency once considered out of reach.

Helen Adair, Chief Product Officer, Taskize

2026 puts legacy post-trade workflows under real strain for UK investment managers

European market infrastructure is heading into a demanding year as the shift to T+1 becomes real rather than theoretical. The regulator has made its expectations clear that firms will be held to account. The larger banks and custodians have already moved into execution mode, applying lessons from the US transition back in 2024. However, the real pressure point sits with smaller asset managers and alternative funds that have long relied on comfortable timelines and manual processes. Two-day settlement allowed for email chains, spreadsheets and people-led workarounds. One day does not.

The challenge is structural rather than cosmetic. The interaction between investment managers and their service providers is where most breaks occur, and this interaction still depends heavily on outdated tools. Lean teams simply cannot absorb higher volumes or faster turnaround times without improved workflows. Yet the solution does not require a wholesale rebuild of operating models. Practical, targeted upgrades can make a significant difference.

Collaboration platforms, self-service tools and API-driven data access can replace slow manual exchanges and give firms a more resilient footing. If smaller managers prioritise these changes in 2026, they will find implementing FCA guidance far easier, and they will be better positioned to meet the demands of T+1 with confidence.

Cybersecurity

Dr Ruth Wandhofer, Head of European Markets at Blackwired

Future significant threats in cybersecurity include increased AI-driven attack sophistication, an expanding digital attack surface, workforce and IT fragmentation, abuse of trusted infrastructure such as cloud platforms, onchain cybercrime, and quantum-turbocharged attacks. Third-party and supply chain cybersecurity risks remain among the most critical challenges. A vulnerability that is largely overlooked but will rise in importance in 2026 is shadow AI, the uncontrolled use of open source and commercial large language models, where employees feed these models with confidential corporate information to simplify their workload.

Emerging technologies such as advanced AI, deepfake detection, zero trust frameworks, and quantum-resistant cryptography will offer more robust defence against increasingly sophisticated cyber-attacks in 2026. The shift toward hybrid and cloud-native environments calls for unified, cloud-agnostic security frameworks and real-time monitoring to address visibility gaps and privilege management challenges. Key to success is a paradigm shift from the old 'detect and respond' to 'predict, prevent and defeat'. Autonomous defence systems must integrate advanced AI for real-time threat detection to obtain critical data on threat actors and their campaigns before they decide to strike.

Ben Goldin, Founder and CEO of Plumery

A trend that will continue gaining momentum throughout 2026 is the shift from customer-first to human-first banking, which aims to get even closer to the customer by understanding their human needs, rather than consumer needs. For example, instead of solely advising on which banking products they should buy, a bank can act as a coach to improve a customer's financial health. Applying hyperpersonalisation in this way, banks can build trust in the digital realm through tailored and empathetic interactions.

While institutions have been exploring what is possible, relevant and achievable within the banking context using generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), 2026 will see more practical actions and initiatives, such as conversational applications in the front and back office. Using the technology to improve efficiency and help staff do more value-add work will have a positive impact on customer experience, as processes will take much less time. It will also help drive financial inclusion by providing data-driven insights to support faster and smarter decisions, making it cheaper to serve atypical customer segments. ■

Spotting opportunity and staying authentic in asset services

From compliance to relationship management and into prime services, Antigoni Andreou, a sales associate at StoneX discusses navigating a fast-paced trading environment, challenging outdated perceptions, and building a career by asking questions and taking ownership

Can you give us an insight into your personal journey into the asset services industry, why did you decide this was the career for you?

In my case, this started with StoneX. Being part of StoneX, for the past seven years, straight out of university, was my entry point into the financial services industry, as well as my entry point into asset services. Throughout this period of time, the company has seen exponential growth, becoming Nasdaq listed, and a Fortune 500 (#42) company; I have grown with it.

While I was part of another division, it looked so exciting 'over there' on the Prime Services desk.

The general buzz was very intriguing and, eventually, through informal education and chats with the desk about the product suite, I felt a pluck of confidence to ask whether there would be any interest in bringing me on as the latest team member.

What aspects of your job do you enjoy the most?

To be at the starting point of the client's journey feels like a privileged position. The early conversations, when a client is learning how I can be useful for their needs and when I am getting to know the client's story, is where I commit to doing our best for the relationship.

There is a certain excitement that comes with getting a client live, and seeing that process come together from front to back, with trading desks through to operations all aligned.

Being fairly new to the industry, how do you find your experience compared to those who are more established? Are there pros and cons to each?

Coming into this without prior experience has actually proven helpful. I am used to fast learning, adapting quickly, and picking up new tools or technology without much friction.

However, given the immensely fast-paced nature of the business, it has also been a baptism of fire at times. This was especially noticeable in the early days, learning through doing and can have a material impact. Although operating at high pressure can bring its stresses, coming in fresh means that if processes can be improved, I am able to make suggestions that can have a positive influence.

At the same time, I definitely recognise the value of people who have been in the industry longer. They have lived through full market cycles, know how funds operate and, importantly, understand the nuances that can only be learnt through experience. That kind of intuition and pattern recognition is something you cannot shortcut.

Have you noticed any misconceptions about the asset servicing industry? Is there anything in the industry you would like to see evolve or change?

Perhaps not a misconception as such, but I feel extremely grateful that I have not experienced the industry as being the ‘boys club’ stereotype that may have existed previously. I am part of the ‘Women of StoneX’, as well as other external networking groups that bring together women in the industry.

The relationships I have formed through these groups have been important to my growth as a woman in asset services, as well as having direct relevance and adding value to my job. I would like to continue to see this take shape and take space within the industry as generations come through and the next wave of young professionals step into leadership roles.

On another note, my personal experience of sales in asset services has also challenged another stereotype that it is a culture based on coffees and lunches all day, every day.

While it is certainly important to form a rapport with clients (one of the things that I love most about my job is the long-term partnerships with clients), speaking frankly, it has become obvious to me that clients respect a visibly hardworking approach.

Meaning that as their sales coverage, I am there, boots on the ground, ready and willing to bring the account live. As the face of the relationship, it is important to me that this is the impression that is conveyed.

What is the training process of a new employee? Do you think it was beneficial to your role and others who may now be in the same position you were?

The traditional exams still stand as prerequisites for my specific role, and passing them opened the door to becoming a UK Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) Authorised Person. The process of revising for and sitting these exams was valuable for me, as it helped me form a strong theoretical knowledge basis for securities and derivatives, including fixed income, equities and futures and options.

It was important to me to pass the exams within the first couple of months of starting the role, so that I could put the theory into practice. StoneX were very supportive of this as part of my training.

Comments from colleagues

"Antigoni is a true team player! Driven, hardworking, and an excellent communicator, she brings her full 'self' to the workplace. This authenticity allows her to build longstanding and genuine relationships with clients and colleagues across the firm."

Dominic Stevens
Vice president, Prime Services
StoneX

"Antigoni has a real enthusiasm to learn and understands the bigger picture with clients, add to this her work ethic, it is easy to see why she has progressed so quickly in her role."

Desmond Lawlor
Senior vice president, Capital Introduction
StoneX

Shadowing my manager and team members on the trading desk was another key part of my early training and development and this was the most helpful element, as my learning style is through 'doing'.

I value experience with the addition of personal, lived examples as I believe that these are the most valuable in a client facing role.

Wherever possible, I would recommend that those in a similar position to me to shadow their peers and colleagues, while not neglecting the formal, exam-based theory, as this will always stand you in good stead for future opportunities.

In terms of your career, where do you see yourself in a decade?

If someone had told me 10 years ago where I would be today, I probably would not have understood how I would get to this point.

Since joining StoneX at 21, and now at 28, I have moulded and shaped my career, through seeing opportunities and taking personal responsibility for my progression.

Joining at a junior level in the Compliance department, in another division, moving through to Relationship Management and now in Prime Services, within the Securities division, has felt very natural and organic, although it has also taken a lot of work not to stay in 'one box'.

I must give kudos to StoneX for enabling, empowering and supporting me to take these career steps internally at StoneX.

At this stage, I am enjoying my role and very importantly, working with the team that I am part of more than anything else that I have experienced. I also love the world of securities andI have certainly clicked with it. So, I would hope that in ten years' time, I am still in the world of asset services, but I also hope that my ability to spot opportunity evolves into making a positive impact as a key player and leader.

Above all, I hope to look back and know, with confidence, that I remained authentic throughout every career decision.

What advice would you give to young graduates when entering the financial services field?

Last summer, I had the pleasure of mentoring an intern on the StoneX graduate scheme. Throughout the 12 weeks, it was a delight to watch her evolve, grow in confidence and demonstrate her abilities.

One key theme that came up was the importance of always asking questions. This may be very basic, but it truly is the path to learning, and there is never a stupid question.

People respect someone who is self-effacing enough to ask a question, rather than potentially running the risk of wasting time, getting things wrong or perhaps even seeming arrogant.

Although it can be daunting at times and, given the dynamic environment of the trading floor, actually, asking a question can in fact show a keen interest and positive attitude to understanding.

Moreover, depending on the topic, how targeting or specific, this can also convey a good level of knowledge, showing awareness of nuances. ■

Industry Appointments

Padbury joins Yealand

Gavin Padbury has been appointed head of operations at Yealand.

In this role, he will be responsible for overseeing the firm's operational strategy, supporting continued business growth and delivering high-quality outcomes for clients.

He brings over 20 years of experience in the financial services industry, across operational leadership, scalability, and service delivery.

Prior to joining Yealand, Padbury served as head of T. Bailey Fund Services, where he led several operations teams responsible for servicing approximately £14 billion in assets.

His career also includes director-level roles at Waystone Transfer Agency Solutions, as well as senior management positions at Bank of New York Mellon and Northern Trust.

"We are delighted to welcome Gavin to Yealand. His depth of experience and proven leadership in operational excellence will be invaluable as we continue to further enhance our operational capabilities and deliver outstanding service to our clients."

Sage Capital welcomes Keogh as Sales Director

Jason Keogh has joined Sage Capital Management as a sales director, with responsibility for driving global growth from hedge funds, asset managers, trading firms, and brokerages.

With over 30 years' experience in the financial markets, the firm says Keogh is a seasoned sales, trading, and business development professional with deep expertise across TradFi, fintech, and digital assets.

He joins Sage Capital Management from Fusion Capital, where he was international sales director for the last two years, managing a global sales team.

His experience spans global banks including Credit Lyonnais, Oppenheimer, and Raymond James; brokers such as Sucden Financial, Old Mutual, and StoneX; and fintech and digital asset firms including EXANTE and Skarb.

The firm adds that his extensive knowledge across multiple asset classes and broad global network of clients, contacts, and counterparties enables him to identify opportunities and deliver tailored solutions in rapidly evolving market environments.

J.P. Morgan selects Moen

Arne Martin Moen has joined J.P. Morgan as head of Securities Services for the Nordics, a newly created role.

Based in Oslo, he will focus on the firm's growth strategy and strengthening its commitment to the Nordic region.

Moen brings more than 20 years of experience in asset management, primarily working in the region.

Most recently at Storebrand Asset Management in Oslo for ten years, he served in roles including chief operating officer and head of investment operations and technology

Prior to that he was at Nordes Bank Investment Management for five years, across different positions such as senior analyst for data and development and portfolio and benchmark data analyst.

The firm says Moen will use his experience producing strong results, combining his technology background with financial acumen, to assist J.P. Morgan as they optimise their operating model and deliver data and digital offerings to their clients in the region.

Tange and Weaver join ClearToken's senior leadership team

ClearToken, a digital financial market infrastructure firm, has announced two senior appointments. The firm says that these appointments aim at enhancing its senior leadership team and further strengthen its legal and risk functions.

Kristi Tange has been appointed group chief risk officer, to lead governance, risk, and strategic oversight, including compliance, communications, and regulatory relations.

She brings nearly three decades of experience at Goldman Sachs across operations, risk, and finance in the US, UK, and Japan.

Most recently, Tange served as global head of operational risk and resilience at Goldman Sachs, where she led an uplift of operational risk and UK resilience programmes.

Previously, she headed recovery and resolution planning, successfully filing two US Title I resolution plans.

Calderwood appointed Hazlewood as Independent Director

Calderwood, a boutique fund governance firm, has appointed Todd Hazlewood as independent director.

Hazlewood is a veteran of the Cayman Islands' fund services industry and has over 25 years of professional experience.

He joins Calderwood from another Cayman-based governance firm, where he was managing director, following senior management positions at large firms in the sector, after starting his career with Deloitte.

With in-depth knowledge of the regulatory framework of the Cayman Islands, Hazlewood's funds expertise encompasses anti-money laundering compliance, corporate services, fund accounting, risk management, shareholder services and global tax reporting, the firm notes.

In his new position, Hazlewood will undertake board appointments on Cayman Islands funds and related structures, providing guidance and counsel on corporate governance and regulatory compliance issues.

Confluence Technologies appoints Rozanski to CFO

Confluence Technologies has appointed Kevin Rozanski as chief financial officer.

Based in Charlotte, North Carolina, Rozanski will report directly to CEO Mark Evans, and will be responsible for shaping and executing the company's financial strategy. In addition, he will oversee financial operations and partner with the leadership team to drive sustainable growth and long-term value creation.

Rozanski brings extensive experience in financial leadership across enterprise software and private equity-backed firms.

BMLL onboards King to lead sales in APAC

BMLL Technologies, an independent provider of historical Level 3 data and analytics, has appointed Karen King as head of sales, APAC.

Based in Hong Kong, King will be responsible for growing BMLL's client base across Asia Pacific and for developing and implementing the company's growth strategy in the region.

Paul Humphrey, CEO of BMLL, comments: "Following Nordic Capital's investment in BMLL, we are focused on accelerating the company's next phase of growth."

Deutsche Bank Malaysia makes new appointments

Deutsche Bank Malaysia has appointed Datin Wan Daneena as chairperson to its board, following approval by Bank Negara Malaysia. She is the first woman to hold this role in the bank's history in Malaysia.

The bank also welcomed Tunku Zain to the board as an independent non-executive director.

Daneena brings over 25 years of experience across financial institutions while Zain is the founding president of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS), a public policy think tank. ■