Financial Services strategic vision 2026-2036

Future proofing Financial Services: The C-level journey from steady disruption to competitive relevance

FUJITSU

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Introduction:
The fundamental collision: Acceleration vs. inertia

Bridging the immediate friction of 2026 to the reinvention of the future in 2036.

2026 is defined by severe operational friction, where the promise of artificial intelligence collides with the reality on the ground. Financial institutions are struggling to reconcile unmodernized legacy technology with the urgent need for cost optimization and frictionless customer experiences. This creates a negative feedback loop: legacy data debt stalls the deployment of advanced automation, which in turn sustains high manual workloads and exacerbates employee resistance.

Looking toward 2036, the vision shifts from mere survival to radical reinvention, anticipating a landscape defined by invisible banking, consent driven customer relationships, and decentralized infrastructure. Leaders should consider aggressive action today to break the cycle of stagnation and build the digital core required for this impending paradigm shift.

Breaking the internal cycle of data paralysis and cultural fear is the absolute prerequisite for participating in the next era of financial services.

Executive summary

A comprehensive overview of the external macro-forces, future scenarios, and transformation imperatives defining the next decade.

The financial services sector is currently navigating a period of intense operational friction. Institutions are caught between the accelerating pace of technological change and the profound inertia of monolithic legacy systems. The immediate horizon is heavily disrupted by geopolitical fragmentation, shifting demographic expectations, and aggressive competition from agile fintech challengers. Internally, traditional banks are actively stalled by severe data debt and an exhausted workforce suffering from transformation fatigue. To survive this steady disruption, executive boards need to prioritize the immediate resolution of these internal cultural and technological barriers before attempting to scale advanced intelligence.

Looking toward the coming decade, leaders should prepare their operational models to withstand highly unpredictable external environments. These future scenarios range from a consolidated landscape of global mega-banks to a chaotic digital splinter-net driven by decentralized alternative ecosystems. Navigating these varied futures requires acknowledging that artificial intelligence and shifting consumer behaviors are permanent structural changes to the market, requiring constant horizon scanning to detect early signals of disruption before they materialize into operational threats.

To achieve competitive relevance across any of these potential futures, institutions must aggressively modernize their internal architectures. This demands dismantling legacy disablers through comprehensive digital core renovation and establishing rigorous trust frameworks to safely govern artificial intelligence. Furthermore, leaders should consider pivoting toward delivering frictionless, hyper-personalized customer experiences powered by deep predictive analytics. Achieving this requires shifting the organizational mindset from internal proprietary development toward active ecosystem orchestration, partnering with external innovators to dramatically accelerate service delivery.

Securing long-term architectural resilience relies on executing a unified action plan that builds structural agility for any plausible future scenario. This involves treating technology not as a traditional cost center, but as the primary strategic engine for continuous adaptation. Because executing this enterprise-wide change is immensely complex, institutions should consider leveraging a highly capable strategic partner to systematically dismantle legacy constraints, manage risk governance, and deploy the secure, cloud-native architectures of the future.

Executing the strategic imperatives detailed in this report provides a unified action plan to build operational resilience for whichever unpredictable future environment ultimately materializes.

Research methodology

A multi-dimensional foresight approach

This research was conducted on behalf of Fujitsu by The Business Advantage Group Limited. It is based on a rigorous, hybrid foresight methodology designed to identify, analyze, and prioritize future trends and their strategic implications for Financial Services leaders. Our approach combines quantitative environmental scanning with qualitative expert validation to ensure insights are both visionary and actionable.

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Core methodology

Environmental scanning and weak signal analysis

A comprehensive scan identified nearly 70 trends and almost 30 weak signals. The approach specifically tracked weak signals, early indicators of potential disruption that could challenge current assumptions and herald future industrial revolutions.

PESTLE framework

All the identified phenomena were categorized using the PESTLE framework (political, economic, social, technological, legal, environmental) to ensure a holistic view of the external environment.

Uncertainty and impact analysis

Each trend was assessed on two C-level centric metrics: importance (strategic relevance) and outcome uncertainty (predictability of impact). High uncertainty and high importance trends formed the basis of our scenario planning.

Stakeholder and C-level validation

Insights were validated through focus group discussions (FGDs), review by industry experts and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with six C-level executives (CIOs, CEOs, COOs) across major financial and Insurance hubs (USA, UK, Canada, Spain and Japan). This on the ground validation ensures the findings reflect the lived reality of decision makers.

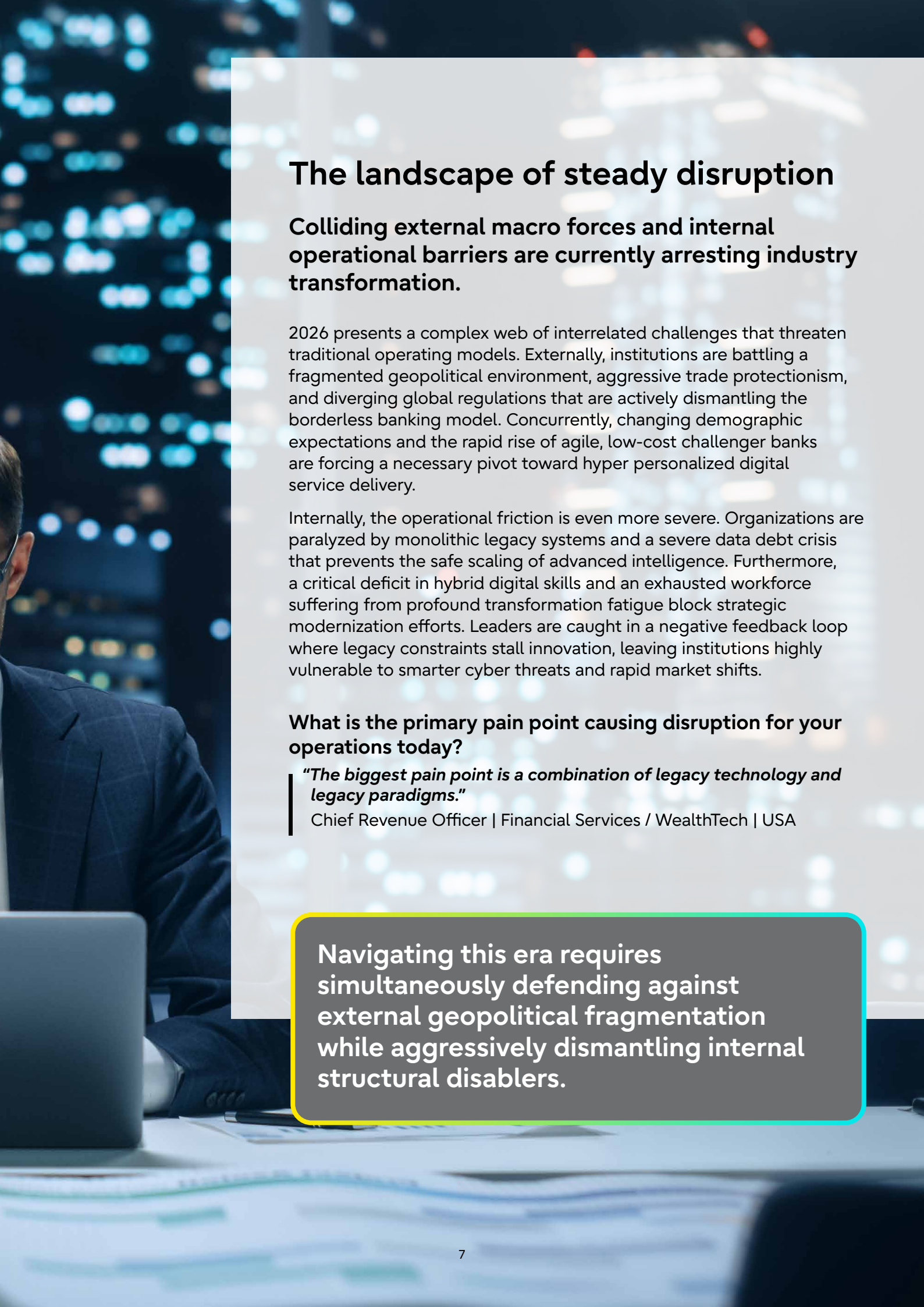
Understanding this methodology sets the foundation for exploring the immediate operational friction detailed in the upcoming section on the era of disruption.

Section

1

The era of disruption

Surviving operational friction in a fractured global landscape.



The landscape of steady disruption

Colliding external macro forces and internal operational barriers are currently arresting industry transformation.

2026 presents a complex web of interrelated challenges that threaten traditional operating models. Externally, institutions are battling a fragmented geopolitical environment, aggressive trade protectionism, and diverging global regulations that are actively dismantling the borderless banking model. Concurrently, changing demographic expectations and the rapid rise of agile, low-cost challenger banks are forcing a necessary pivot toward hyper personalized digital service delivery.

Internally, the operational friction is even more severe. Organizations are paralyzed by monolithic legacy systems and a severe data debt crisis that prevents the safe scaling of advanced intelligence. Furthermore, a critical deficit in hybrid digital skills and an exhausted workforce suffering from profound transformation fatigue block strategic modernization efforts. Leaders are caught in a negative feedback loop where legacy constraints stall innovation, leaving institutions highly vulnerable to smarter cyber threats and rapid market shifts.

What is the primary pain point causing disruption for your operations today?

> ***"The biggest pain point is a combination of legacy technology and legacy paradigms."***
>
> Chief Revenue Officer | Financial Services / WealthTech | USA

Navigating this era requires simultaneously defending against external geopolitical fragmentation while aggressively dismantling internal structural disablers.

The geopolitical and economic fracture

Unpredictable trade policies, diverging global regulations, and tough economic headwinds are actively dismantling the traditional borderless banking model.

The era of seamless globalization has concluded, replaced by a volatile landscape defined by active political and economic disruption. Executive boards report that unpredictable trade policies and aggressive tariff wars are actively disrupting supply chains and slowing down international commerce. Simultaneously, persistent inflation and interest rate volatility are squeezing profit margins and altering borrower health.

Furthermore, diverging global rules, particularly regarding data privacy and artificial intelligence governance, are creating immense compliance complexity. This fragmentation negates the historical advantage of a unified global network, forcing major international institutions to consider decentralizing into regional entities to protect their operations and bypass regulatory friction.

How do global political trends impact your regional operations?

> ***"From a political and cultural point of view, there are massive differences in managing the same business in different locations."***
> Chief Human Resource Officer | Insurance | Spain

Leaders should consider empowering local and regional teams with autonomous decision making to bypass the friction of diverging global regulations.

Changing demographics and consumer expectations

A massive generational wealth transfer and shifting consumer behaviors are forcing a pivot toward hyper personalized, frictionless digital service delivery.

The shift in customer behavior is already well understood by financial services leaders. The issue now is the continued evolution of digital channels and the rising standard set by digitally native customer segments. Customers increasingly expect instant, intuitive, and low-friction services, putting pressure on institutions to modernize engagement models and make relationship banking work across digital channels.

This convergence of economic pressure and evolving consumer behavior requires a fundamental rethink of product delivery. Retaining clients now relies entirely on understanding and predicting specific product needs through deep data analysis. Institutions that fail to adapt their service models to meet these new, demanding expectations risk massive client attrition to more agile competitors.

How is your organization adapting to shifting customer behaviors and the decline of physical cash?

> ***"Technology is going to be a key driver of new revenue as the company moves into digital commerce."***
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Logistics | USA

Revenue resilience requires an urgent pivot toward hyper personalized, low friction digital products tailored to younger, digital native demographics.

The dual threat of agile challengers

Incumbents are facing severe pressure from both consolidated global mega banks and the rapid innovation cycles of nimble, low-cost fintech ecosystems.

The competitive environment is intensifying from two opposing directions. On one end, rapid market consolidation is creating massive, systemically important institutions with almost insurmountable economies of scale. On the other end, traditional banks face a severe existential threat from agile challenger banks and digital native ecosystems.

These new competitors operate with significantly lower headcounts, utilize modern microservices architectures, and deploy new product enhancements on a weekly basis. Legacy institutions, burdened by high structural overheads and bureaucratic decision making, risk severe market share erosion if they cannot match the speed, pricing, and customer centricity of these disruptive new entrants.

How is the competitive landscape shifting in your specific sector?

> ***"We are more scared of smaller banks kicking us out than bigger banks merging."***
>
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Retail Banking | UK

Incumbents need to abandon the strategy of building everything internally and start actively acquiring or partnering with external fintech innovations.

Transformation fatigue and the talent cliff

Continuous restructuring programs and an acute scarcity of hybrid digital skills are creating severe cultural inertia and blocking modernization efforts.

The most formidable barriers to adaptation are deeply internal. Years of continuous, iterative restructuring programs have exhausted the workforce, creating a pervasive culture of transformation fatigue. This inertia is compounded by widespread apprehension regarding artificial intelligence, with employees fearing job displacement rather than embracing new tools.

Furthermore, the industry faces an acute talent cliff. There is a critical scarcity of professionals possessing the necessary hybrid digital, data engineering, and advanced algorithmic skills required for the modern financial landscape. Without a massive reskilling imperative and a deliberate effort to manage cultural resistance, strategic modernization efforts will inevitably stall.

What is the biggest internal barrier to adapting your organization at the necessary pace?

> ***"I have done transformations for 40 years, and the blocker has always been people and change inertia."***
>
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Retail Banking | UK

Leadership should prioritize transparent communication and robust reskilling programs to transition employees from fear to active technological adoption.

Legacy architecture and the data debt crisis

Monolithic legacy systems and deeply fragmented data architectures are preventing the safe scaling of artificial intelligence and advanced automation.

The strategic ambition to leverage advanced intelligence is consistently thwarted by unmodernized technology estates. Large financial institutions are anchored by monolithic architectures that make systemic change prohibitively slow and expensive. More critically, organizations are suffering from severe data debt.

Unreconciled, dirty, and siloed data prevents the safe training and deployment of algorithmic models. Deploying artificial intelligence on a foundation of poor data risks generating critical inaccuracies, which constitutes a massive red flag for strict industry regulators. Fixing this broken digital plumbing and establishing clean data pipelines is an absolute prerequisite before any advanced automation can deliver reliable business value.

What are the primary internal barriers preventing the rapid modernization of legacy architectures?

> ***"The biggest risks are internal slowness and bureaucracy. The negative side is that we are running backwards compared to other industries that are more agile and adapted to constant change."***
>
> Chief Human Resource Officer | Insurance | Spain

Simplify the technology estate by aggressively removing redundant systems and establishing rigorous, enterprise-wide data reconciliation protocols.

Breaking the cycle of stagnation

Overcoming today's operational friction is the mandatory first step toward preparing for the technological leaps of the coming decade.

The current state of financial services is defined by a dangerous negative feedback loop. The industry desperately needs advanced automation to solve its cost and productivity crises. Yet legacy data quality and cultural fear prevent the safe deployment of these exact tools. Because new technology cannot be fully leveraged, manual workloads remain unsustainably high, perpetuating transformation fatigue and bureaucratic resistance.

Breaking this loop is the primary strategic mandate for the executive board. Moving beyond this era of disruption requires a fundamental shift in both operational architecture and human capital management to survive the transition.

How would you characterize the pace of change across the financial sector?

> ***"The negative side is that we are running backwards compared to other industries that are more agile and adapted to constant change."***
>
> Chief Human Resource Officer | Insurance | Spain

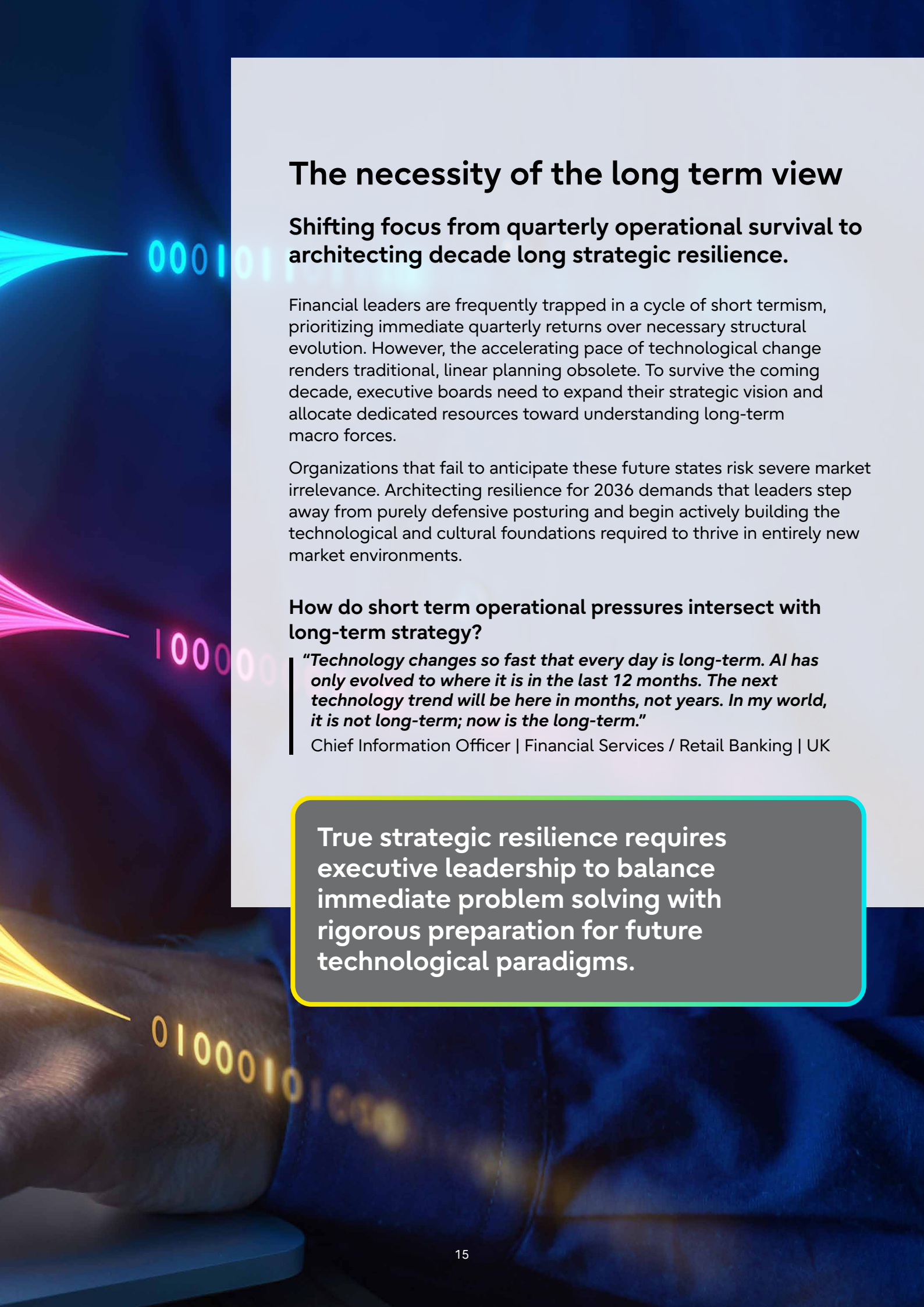
Resolving this immediate operational friction provides the necessary foundation to integrate the intelligence and automation required for the 2036 technology landscape.

Section

2

Strategic scenario planning for an uncertain future

The technology landscape and structural scenarios that will define the financial industry by 2036.



The necessity of the long term view

Shifting focus from quarterly operational survival to architecting decade long strategic resilience.

Financial leaders are frequently trapped in a cycle of short termism, prioritizing immediate quarterly returns over necessary structural evolution. However, the accelerating pace of technological change renders traditional, linear planning obsolete. To survive the coming decade, executive boards need to expand their strategic vision and allocate dedicated resources toward understanding long-term macro forces.

Organizations that fail to anticipate these future states risk severe market irrelevance. Architecting resilience for 2036 demands that leaders step away from purely defensive posturing and begin actively building the technological and cultural foundations required to thrive in entirely new market environments.

How do short term operational pressures intersect with long-term strategy?

> ***"Technology changes so fast that every day is long-term. AI has only evolved to where it is in the last 12 months. The next technology trend will be here in months, not years. In my world, it is not long-term; now is the long-term."***
>
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Retail Banking | UK

True strategic resilience requires executive leadership to balance immediate problem solving with rigorous preparation for future technological paradigms.

From market signals to strategic scenarios

Utilizing a robust environmental scanning methodology to isolate the critical drivers of industry change.

Navigating uncertainty requires a structured approach to foresight. This research methodology transitions abstract market noise into highly actionable strategic intelligence. The foundation relies on scanning over 70 macro trends across political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental dimensions.

By filtering these broad trends through the lens of executive validation, we isolate the specific driving forces that carry the highest potential impact and the greatest degree of uncertainty. These refined variables are then synthesized to construct distinct, plausible future environments, providing a rigorous framework for stress testing current business models against future realities.

What is required to make foresight insights actionable for leadership?

> ***"What makes insights actionable is almost like giving them the so what. Your choices today are the material that create your future tomorrow."***
>
> Chief Revenue Officer | Financial Services / WealthTech | USA

Scenario planning moves organizations beyond reactive guessing, providing a structured mechanism to anticipate and prepare for multiple plausible futures.

Identifying the structural driving forces

Mapping the primary macroeconomic and technological shifts universally impacting the financial sector.

The trajectory of the financial services industry is being actively shaped by several universally acknowledged driving forces. These represent the major structural trends that will inevitably impact all institutions, regardless of their specific geographic location or market segment.

Chief among these is the normalization of artificial intelligence, which is transitioning from a speculative technology into the core engine of industry productivity. Concurrently, demographic shifts are radically altering customer expectations, demanding hyper personalized and frictionless digital delivery. Understanding these foundational drivers is critical, as they form the baseline reality upon which all future competitive strategies be built.

How is artificial intelligence reshaping the foundational landscape of the industry?

> ***"I view artificial intelligence as a new technological revolution, similar to previous revolutions like the advent of electricity."***
> Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer | Financial Services / AI | Canada

Leaders should consider artificial intelligence and shifting demographic demands not as temporary trends, but as permanent structural changes to the market.

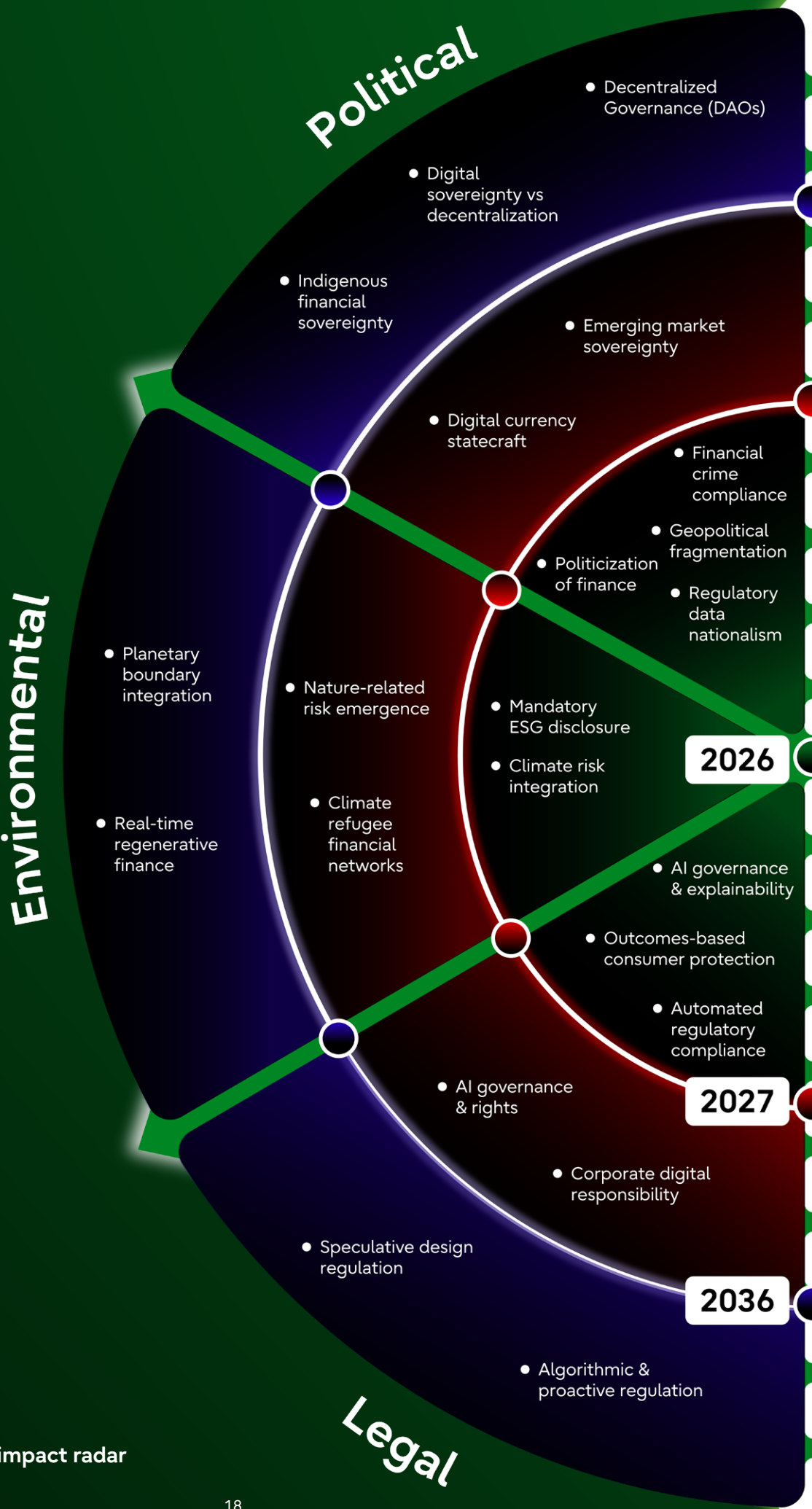
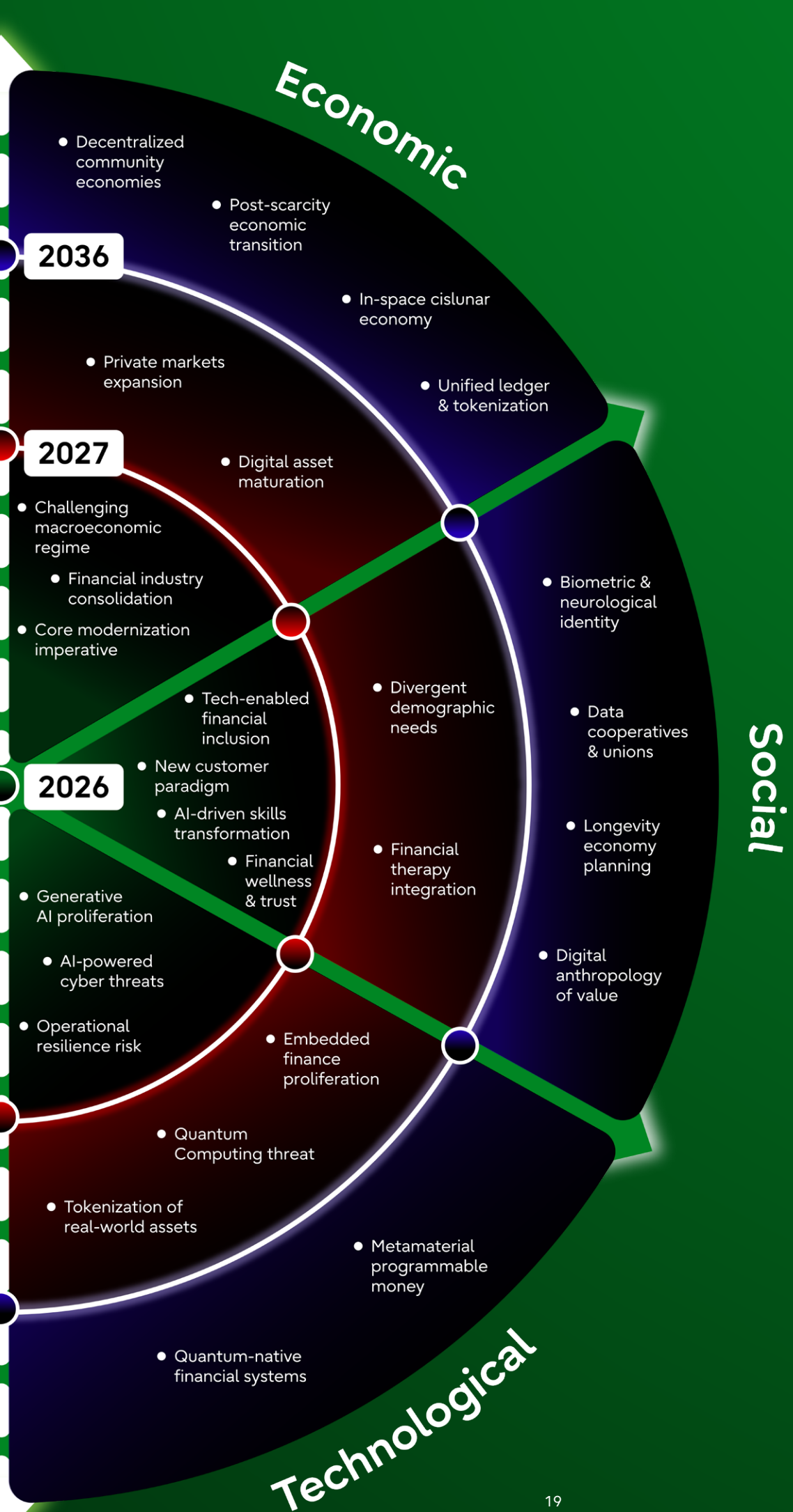


Figure 1: The macro-trend impact radar


Economic
Social
Technological
2036
2027
2026
Decentralized community economies
Post-scarcity economic transition
In-space cislunar economy
Unified ledger & tokenization
Private markets expansion
Digital asset maturation
Challenging macroeconomic regime
Financial industry consolidation
Core modernization imperative
Tech-enabled financial inclusion
New customer paradigm
AI-driven skills transformation
Financial wellness & trust
Generative AI proliferation
AI-powered cyber threats
Operational resilience risk
Biometric & neurological identity
Data cooperatives & unions
Longevity economy planning
Digital anthropology of value
Divergent demographic needs
Financial therapy integration
Embedded finance proliferation
Quantum Computing threat
Tokenization of real-world assets
Metamaterial programmable money
Quantum-native financial systems

From trends to scenarios:
The logic of the future

Scenarios are not guesses; they are the structured outcome of high impact, high uncertainty forces colliding.

To derive the four potential futures of 2036, we applied a rigorous trend impact analysis and an uncertainty filter to the core structural forces identified in our research.

- **Rating:** We rated every trend on two dimensions: importance (how much it matters for the industry) and uncertainty (how hard it is to predict its outcome)
- **Filtering:** Trends that are high importance / low uncertainty are treated as guaranteed realities present in all scenarios
- **Axes formation:** The trends that are high importance / high uncertainty, specifically global operating environment and engine of innovation, became the two axes of our matrix. These are the variables that will define the differences between the four visions of future worlds.

Scenario planning moves organizations beyond reactive guessing, providing a structured mechanism to architect operational resilience against multiple unpredictable futures.

To map the future, we filtered the main structural trends through a matrix defined by two critical axes: the global operating environment (ranging from integrated world to fragmented world) and the engine of innovation (ranging from incumbent evolution to ecosystem revolution). Crucially, the resulting four scenarios are not strategic options for an enterprise to select from a menu. They represent unpredictable external environments dictated by macro forces beyond any single company's control. Therefore, the goal is not to choose a favorite scenario, but to formulate robust, adaptive strategies to prepare for all four possible futures.

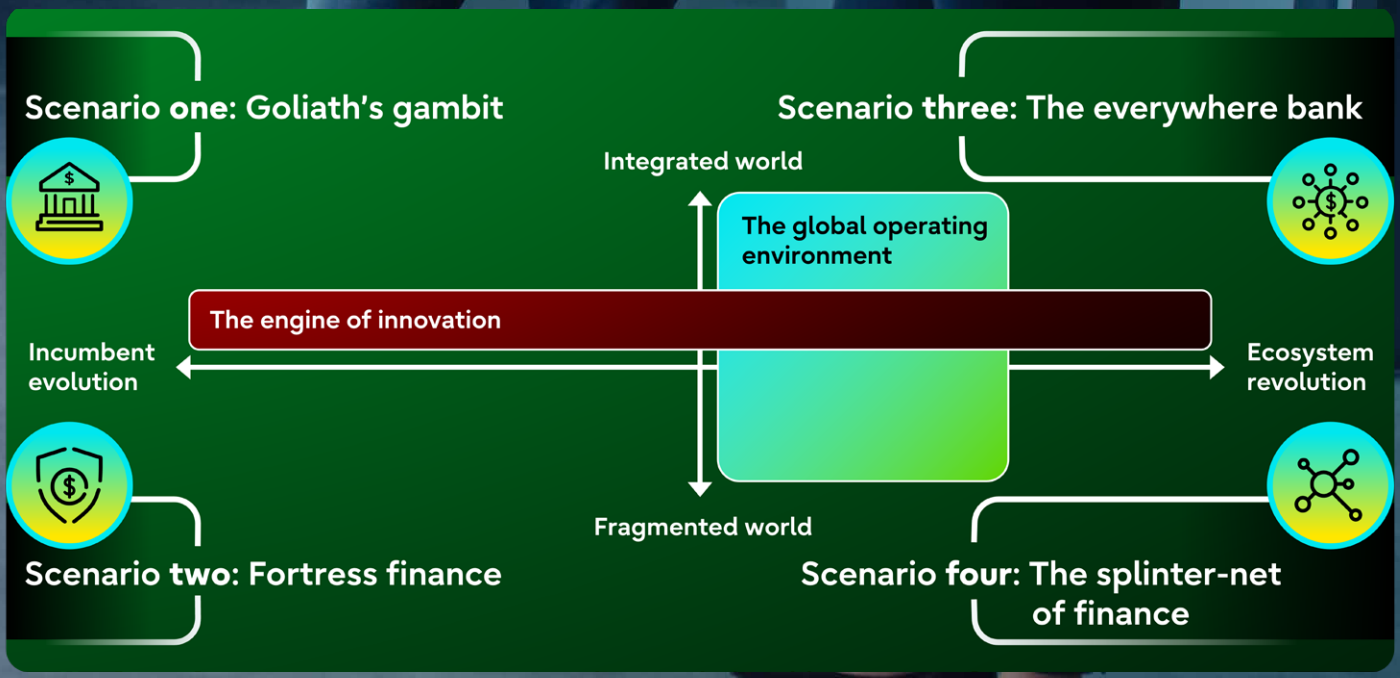


Figure 2: Financial Services strategic scenario matrix

Defining the critical uncertainties

Exploring the two primary axes of uncertainty that will dictate the future operating environment.

While some trends are predictable, the future landscape will ultimately be defined by two highly uncertain macro forces. These represent the critical variables that will dictate the rules of engagement for 2036.

The first critical variable is the global operating environment, measuring the tension between a globally integrated economy and a highly fragmented, protectionist world. The second variable is the engine of innovation, measuring the battle between the ongoing consolidation of traditional mega banks and the disruptive revolution of open, decentralised fintech ecosystems. The collision of these two volatile forces creates the four distinct future scenarios that institutions need to prepare for.

How are geopolitical changes affecting your long-term strategic vision?

> ***"The constant changes in regulations and laws from a political and governmental standpoint make achieving our vision more complex."***
> Chief Human Resource Officer | Insurance | Spain

Strategic planning needs to account for extreme variances in both geopolitical stability and traditional market structures.

Understanding the scenario matrix

It is vital to distinguish between external realities and internal choices. These four quadrants represent potential external futures that business leaders need to be prepared to navigate. They are unpredictable environments shaped by global politics and technological compounding. Your strategic options are the internal actions you take today to ensure your organization remains resilient regardless of which external future ultimately materializes.

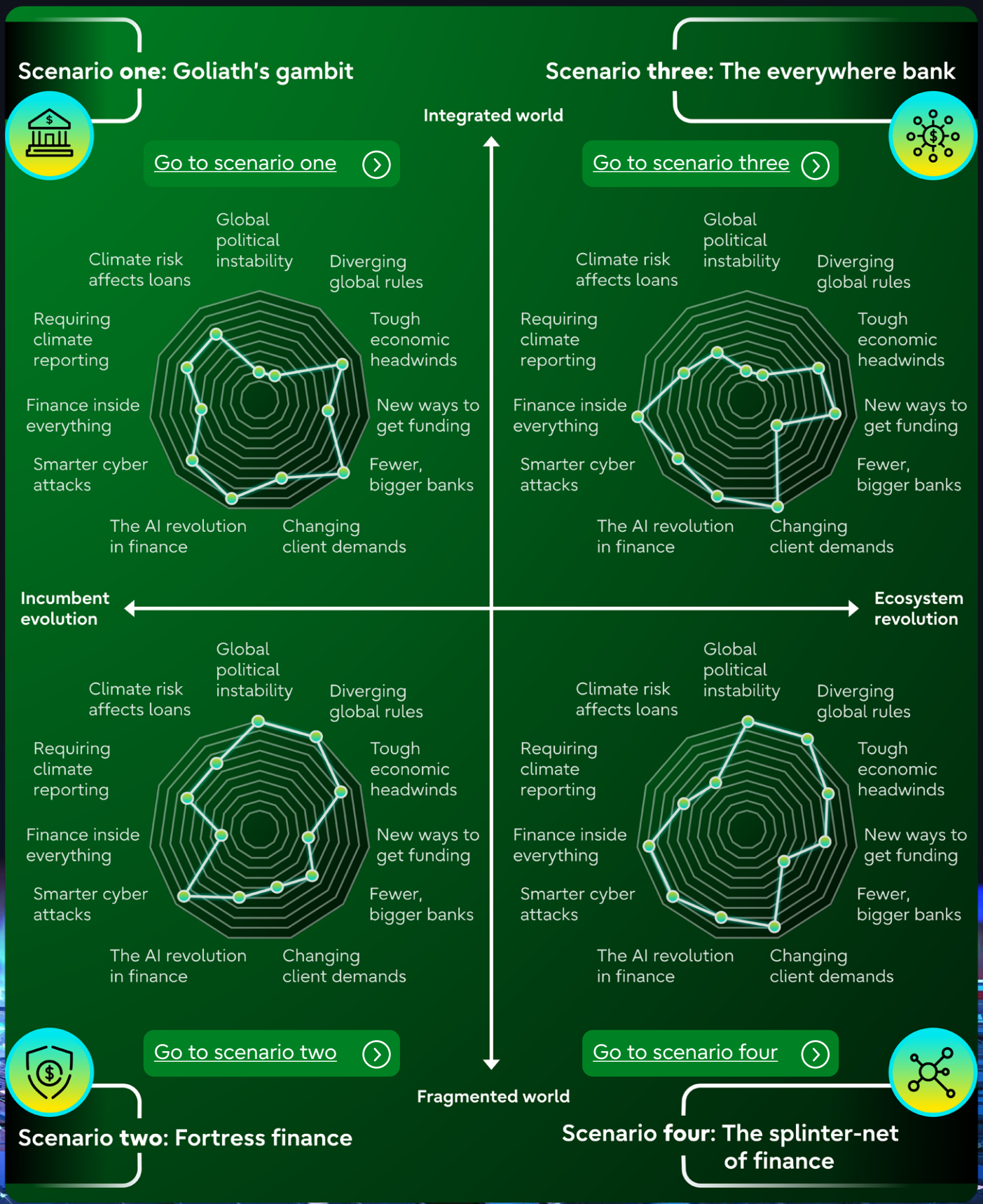


Figure 3: Comparative trend impact analysis

Scenario one: Goliath's gambit

An integrated global landscape dominated by incumbent mega banks operating at massive scale.

In this scenario, global cooperation prevails, enabling massive, borderless financial operations. The market is defined by incumbent evolution, where traditional institutions aggressively consolidate to achieve insurmountable economies of scale. These mega banks leverage their vast resources to acquire emerging technologies and outpace agile challengers, solidifying their dominance through superior data aggregation and robust artificial intelligence deployment.

The emergence of this scenario is signaled by a rise in cross border data flows, a reduction in regional protectionism, and widespread consolidation leading to fewer, bigger banks dominating the international market.

What is the primary ambition for customer engagement in the coming decade?

> ***"Our vision is to be a relationship bank that happens to be digital."***
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Retail Banking | UK

Strategic playbook:

- **Focus on:** Aggressive market consolidation and strategic acquisitions to achieve massive operational scale.
- **Focus on:** Standardizing global data architectures to power enterprise-wide artificial intelligence deployment.
- **Move away from:** Niche, hyper localized product developments that cannot easily scale across international borders.
- **Move away from:** Heavy reliance on third party fintech ecosystems that could dilute direct customer relationships.

What the radar diagram shows:

This scenario is primarily driven by massive industry consolidation and rapid technological advancement. The sharpest spikes in fewer, bigger banks and the artificial intelligence revolution indicate a future where a few traditional mega-banks dominate the market. Because global political instability remains manageable, these incumbent giants can successfully leverage artificial intelligence to scale their operations efficiently across borders.

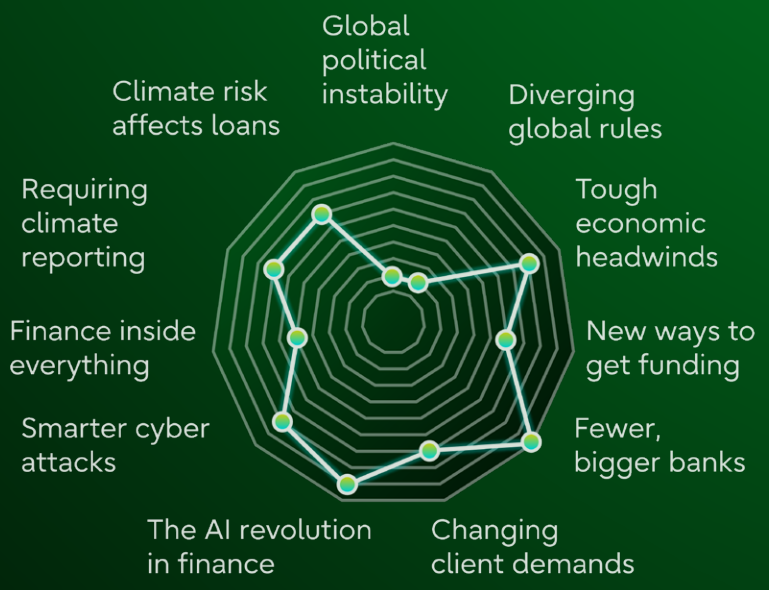


Figure 4: Scenario one

Scenario two: Fortress finance

A fragmented geopolitical world where incumbents retreat into highly defended, localized regional fiefdoms.

This scenario materializes in a highly volatile geopolitical climate characterized by severe trade protectionism and data nationalism. The unified global banking model fractures, forcing large institutions to retreat and operate as deeply entrenched, heavily regulated regional entities. Security, compliance, and supply chain resilience become the primary drivers of value, completely overshadowing global efficiency.

The emergence of this scenario is signaled by a rise in diverging global rules, increased state level data nationalism, and aggressive regulatory fragmentation that actively stifles cross border expansion.

What structural risk threatens large organizations operating across borders?

> ***"Sometimes individuals are making decisions for themselves or staking claim for their kind of fiefdom within the organization instead of what is best for the company."***
>
> Chief Revenue Officer | Financial Services / Logistics | USA

Strategic playbook:

- **Focus on:** Decentralizing operations to empower autonomous regional headquarters that can rapidly adapt to local regulations.
- **Focus on:** Building highly secure, localized data centers to comply with aggressive state-level data nationalism.
- **Move away from:** Highly integrated, globalized supply chains that are vulnerable to sudden trade tariffs or political sanctions.
- **Move away from:** Universal product strategies that fail to account for deep cultural and regulatory differences across borders.

What the radar diagram shows:

This future is entirely shaped by geopolitical conflict and regulatory hurdles. The extreme peaks in global political instability, diverging global rules, and smarter cyber attacks highlight an environment where international cooperation has failed. Consequently, institutions are forced to abandon open innovation and retreat into highly defended, regional operations focused strictly on security, compliance, and surviving economic headwinds.

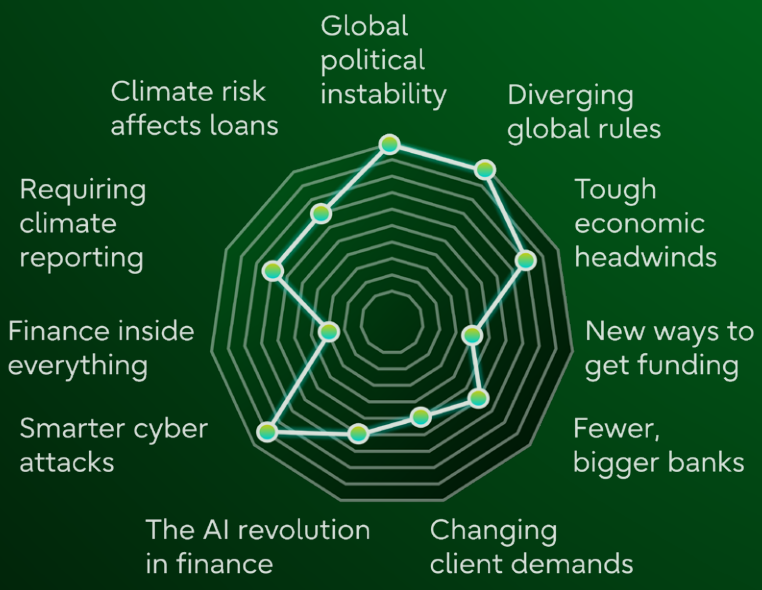


Figure 5: Scenario two

Scenario three: The everywhere bank

An integrated technological world where finance becomes invisible and embedded within non bank digital ecosystems.

In a highly cooperative global environment driven by an ecosystem revolution, traditional banking borders dissolve. Financial Services become deeply embedded into the fabric of everyday digital platforms, retail giants, and technology conglomerates. Consumers rarely interact with traditional bank interfaces, instead accessing hyper personalized financial products seamlessly at their exact point of need.

The emergence of this scenario is signaled by a rise in open banking APIs, the rapid scaling of finance embedded inside everything, and widespread partnerships between traditional incumbents and large technology firms.

What is the greatest risk for institutions in the current technological arms race?

> ***"The biggest risk is being late in adoption and being eventually acquired by someone else."***
> Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer | Financial Services / AI | Canada

Strategic playbook:

- **Focus on:** Developing robust open API architectures that allow seamless integration with external digital platforms.
- **Focus on:** Transitioning the business model from a direct service provider to a background utility enabler.
- **Move away from:** Heavy capital investments in proprietary, closed loop customer facing applications.
- **Move away from:** Traditional marketing strategies that rely entirely on brand loyalty rather than point of sale convenience.

What the radar diagram shows:

This scenario is defined by frictionless technological integration and rapidly evolving consumer needs. With global political instability at its absolute lowest, the market is overwhelmingly driven by finance inside everything, changing client demands, and the artificial intelligence revolution. This points to a future where traditional banking interfaces disappear, allowing financial services to become seamlessly embedded into everyday digital platforms.

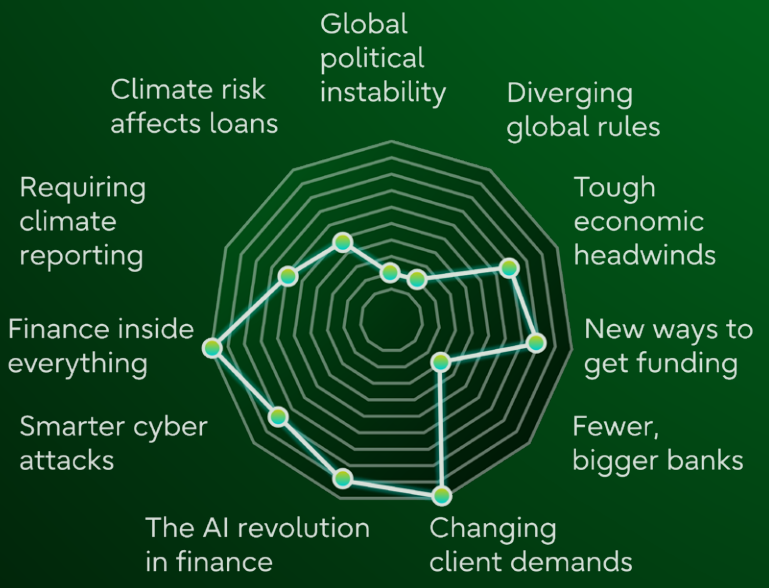


Figure 6: Scenario three

Scenario four: The splinter net of finance

A highly fractured reality characterized by chaotic, hyper localized, and decentralized alternative financial ecosystems.

This represents the most disruptive environment, where severe geopolitical fragmentation collides with a radical decentralization of technology. Trust in traditional institutions collapses, driving consumers and businesses toward hyper localized, blockchain driven alternative networks. The market splinters into thousands of disconnected micro ecosystems, making regulatory oversight nearly impossible and forcing institutions to operate in a highly volatile, unpredictable landscape.

The emergence of this scenario is signaled by a rise in uncoordinated regional blockchain networks, the proliferation of alternative funding methods, and aggressive decentralization driven by an ecosystem revolution.

What critical emerging trend requires more focus from the traditional banking sector?

> ***"It is a really good list, but I think one thing that is missing is around crypto."***
>
> Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer | Financial Services / AI | Canada

Strategic playbook:

- **Focus on:** Developing deep expertise in decentralized finance protocols and blockchain interoperability.
- **Focus on:** Establishing highly agile, cross functional teams capable of rapid deployment in volatile micro markets.
- **Move away from:** Rigid, multi-year strategic plans that assume long-term market stability.
- **Move away from:** Over reliance on traditional fiat currency channels as the sole mechanism for value transfer.

What the radar diagram shows:

This diagram maps a highly chaotic future driven by the collision of extreme political division and radical technological decentralization.

Maximum pressure from diverging global rules and political instability combines with high scores in new ways to get funding and finance inside everything. With traditional bank consolidation dropping to zero, the market completely fractures into thousands of disconnected, hyper-localized alternative financial networks.

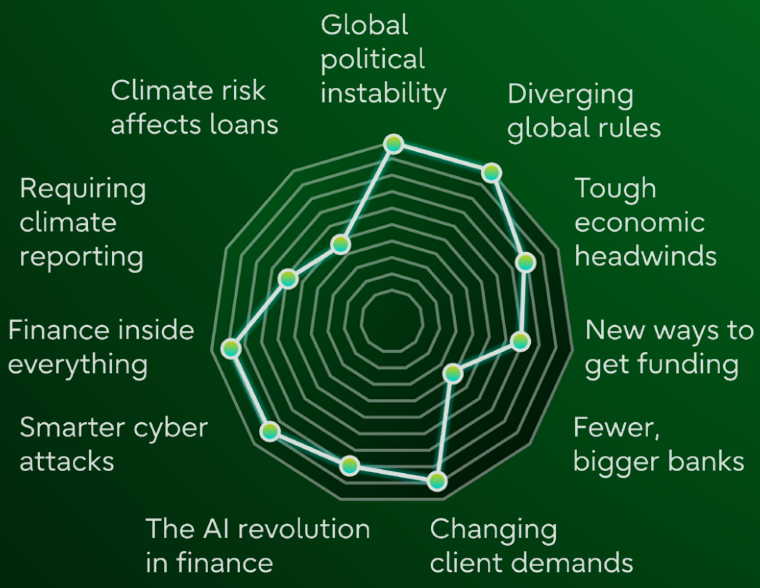


Figure 7: Scenario four

Monitoring weak emerging signals

Nascent technological and social shifts that could rapidly mature into disruptive forces.

Beyond the dominant structural trends, strategic foresight requires vigilant monitoring of weak signals on the industry's periphery. These often-overlooked signals matter because they can expose early shifts that may later challenge core assumptions, disrupt existing revenue models, or change how financial institutions serve customers, manage risk and compete. Rather than tracking isolated phenomena, executive boards should consider monitoring these four emerging macro themes that possess the potential to cause exponential disruption.

- **Pre-emptive algorithmic regulation:** A paradigm shift from reactive enforcement to proactive, artificial intelligence driven financial supervision, where regulators use real time data to generate institutional risk scores before rules are broken.
- **Decentralized parallel economies:** The rise of community owned financial ecosystems, indigenous financial networks, and decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs) that challenge traditional state backed monetary policies.
- **Biometric and neurological trust:** As artificial intelligence scales, verifying digital identity will increasingly rely on fusing immutable biological data and brain computer interfaces to distinguish genuine human actors from automated agents.
- **Planetary boundary integration:** A post ESG model where real-time planetary health data (such as ecosystem carrying capacity) becomes a hard, fundamental constraint on all global financial investment decisions.

How crucial is internal adaptation for future resilience?

> ***"The engine of innovation is the heart of an organization and it is so critical."***
>
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Retail Banking | UK

Establishing dedicated environmental scanning units allows leadership to proactively pilot emerging technologies before they transition into mainstream operational threats.

Emerging signals that could redefine the industry:

- **Algorithmic and proactive regulation:** A paradigm shift from reactive enforcement to preemptive, AI driven financial supervision and institutional risk scoring.
- **Digital sovereignty versus decentralization:** The conflict between top-down state technological independence and the bottom-up rise of community owned economies.
- **Decentralized community economies:** The emergence of parallel financial systems and local currencies developed by communities for self determination.
- **Post scarcity economic transition:** A systemic shift towards economies designed to equitably distribute automated abundance rather than allocating scarce capital.
- **Real time regenerative finance:** A post ESG model where finance is actively redesigned to restore environmental health using verifiable, real time planetary data.
- **Climate refugee financial networks:** The creation of specialized financial infrastructure, microfinance, and insurance dedicated to climate displaced populations.
- **Unified ledger and tokenization:** Integrating tokenized physical and financial assets with central bank digital currencies onto a single, programmable platform.
- **Biometric and neurological identity:** Fusing immutable biological data and brain computer interfaces (BCIs) to verify digital identity and distinguish humans from AI.
- **Data cooperatives and unions:** Collectives where individuals pool their data to bargain against corporate monopolies and negotiate terms of access.
- **Financial therapy integration:** Recognizing that money decisions are emotionally driven by merging mental health assessments into traditional financial planning.
- **Longevity economy financial planning:** The complete reinvention of wealth management, insurance, and inheritance models designed for extreme 200-year lifespans.
- **Quantum native financial systems:** Building overarching financial architectures and instantaneous fraud detection networks natively upon the principles of quantum mechanics.
- **Metamaterial programmable money:** Embedding digital financial logic, ownership rights, and transactional capabilities directly into engineered physical objects.

Designing the hybrid enterprise

Acknowledging that future scenarios are unpredictable external realities requiring highly adaptable operational architectures.

It is critical to understand that the four scenarios detailed in this section are not strategic menus from which an organization can choose. They are largely unpredictable external environments dictated by macro forces beyond the control of any single institution.

The ultimate goal of scenario planning is not to predict the exact future, but to design an adaptable, hybrid enterprise capable of absorbing the shocks of whichever reality materializes. This requires a fundamental shift in operational design, moving away from rigid efficiency and heavily towards structural flexibility and dynamic resource allocation.

What mindset is required to successfully adapt to these unpredictable future disruptions?

> ***"The people that are working on what has not gone right, those are the ones that have the capacity to learn and to evolve faster."***
> Chief Human Resource Officer | Insurance | Spain

To navigate these four external scenarios successfully, organizations need to focus their resources on the four internal dimensions of transformation detailed in the next section.

Section

3

Four dimensions of transformation

Navigating risk and business model innovation to build structural resilience across four highly volatile future scenarios.

The transformation battlegrounds

Addressing structural disablers to build an adaptable and resilient operating model for the coming decade.

To navigate the volatile external scenarios outlined previously, financial institutions need to turn their strategic focus inward. The current operating models of many legacy banks are actively hindering their ability to adapt to sudden market shifts. These structural disablers include deeply siloed data architectures, rigid hierarchical decision making, and a pervasive culture of risk aversion that consistently stalls technological adoption.

To survive and eventually dominate the market, executive leadership should consider executing a coordinated transformation program across four critical battlegrounds. This involves dismantling the barriers of legacy infrastructure while simultaneously adopting the technological enablers required for future agility. Success depends entirely on an organization ability to execute this transition while maintaining day to day operational stability.

What event typically triggers a profound reevaluation of a foundational operating model?

> ***"We had a massive setback two years ago that dragged us almost to nonexistence, forcing us into a significant and painful transformation journey focused on cost optimization and understanding how technology can enable our strategy."***
>
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Retail Banking | UK

Sustainable transformation requires institutions to aggressively identify and dismantle structural disablers before attempting to scale new technological enablers.

Dimension one: Digital core renovation

Dismantling legacy monolithic systems to enable microservice agility and fluid data integration.

The most significant barrier to modernizing financial services is the persistent reliance on rigid, monolithic legacy systems. These outdated architectures create severe data silos, making it nearly impossible to achieve the real time processing speeds required by modern digital consumers. Furthermore, maintaining this legacy infrastructure consumes a disproportionate amount of the technology budget, starving vital innovation initiatives of crucial funding.

Leaders need to transition toward composable, cloud native architectures that utilize independent microservices. This renovation allows institutions to update specific functional components without disrupting the entire enterprise system. By breaking down data silos and establishing clean, unified data pipelines, organizations can finally build the foundational layer necessary for the safe and effective deployment of advanced artificial intelligence.

What is the primary operational objective behind expanding your digital banking capabilities across regions?

> ***"The main driving force is to improve as a bank by continuing to offer more services and to smooth out the difficulties between our different geographies."***
>
> Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer | Financial Services / AI | Canada

Transformation response:

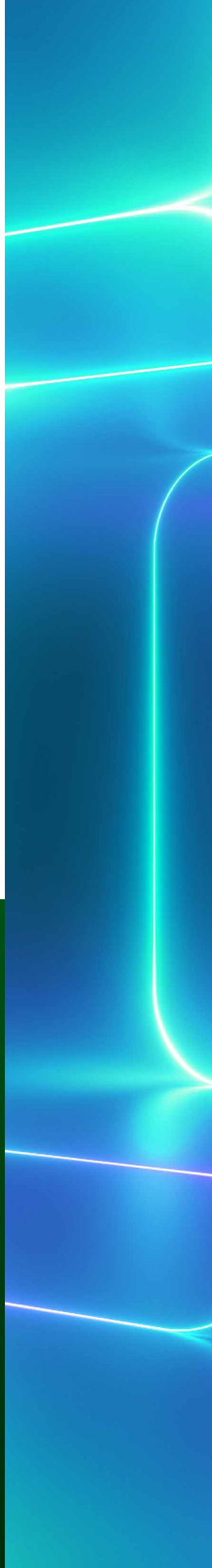
Transition away from rigid monolithic platforms toward highly adaptable, cloud native microservices.

Managing the disablers:

Identify and decommission redundant legacy applications that consume excessive maintenance budgets.

Leveraging the enablers:

Deploy enterprise wide, cloud based data lakes to establish a single, unified source of truth.



Dimension two: Trust architecture

Institutionalizing rigorous artificial intelligence governance as the foundation for safe adoption and regulatory compliance.

As algorithmic models become more autonomous, the potential for systemic risk increases exponentially. Financial institutions are operating under intense scrutiny from global regulators who are increasingly focused on algorithmic bias, data privacy, and the unexplainable nature of complex machine learning decisions. Without a robust governance framework, scaling these technologies introduces severe compliance vulnerabilities and risks catastrophic reputational damage.

Institutions should consider building a comprehensive trust architecture that embeds ethics and transparency directly into the development lifecycle. This involves implementing continuous model monitoring, rigorous bias testing, and clear human in the loop oversight mechanisms. By establishing this foundational layer of trust, executives can confidently deploy automation at scale, knowing that every algorithmic decision aligns with both regulatory requirements and the ethical standards of the organization.

How do you ensure that aggressive business expansion does not compromise the security of the institution?

> ***"We work closely with the sales business to ensure that all new business aligns with the risk appetite that was established when the business began."***
> Senior VP / Chief Risk Officer | Financial Services / Risk | Japan

Transformation response:

Embed proactive risk management and ethical oversight directly into the technology development lifecycle.

Managing the disablers:

Eliminate isolated shadow technology projects that operate outside of central governance and compliance monitoring.

Leveraging the enablers:

Utilize automated model monitoring tools to continuously audit algorithm performance and immediately detect compliance deviations.

Dimension three: Hyper personalization at scale

Leveraging agentic artificial intelligence and clean data to deliver frictionless, predictive customer outcomes.

The modern financial consumer no longer accepts generic product offerings or fragmented service experiences. Influenced by seamless interactions with global technology platforms, customers now demand highly contextualized, predictive financial interventions delivered at their exact point of need. Institutions that rely on traditional, backward looking demographic segmentation are rapidly losing market share to more agile competitors.

To retain loyalty, leaders need to transition from reactive service models to proactive, predictive engagement. This requires the deployment of agentic artificial intelligence capable of analyzing vast amounts of real time transactional data to anticipate specific customer requirements. By delivering precise, highly individualized financial solutions before the customer even recognizes the need, organizations can fundamentally transition from functioning as a basic utility to serving as a trusted financial partner.

How are you planning to elevate the service experience for your end investors in the coming years?

> ***"On a deeper level, this involves integrating important data for our clientele, augmenting that data with artificial intelligence to provide insights and drive better behavior."***
>
> Chief Revenue Officer | Financial Services / WealthTech | USA

Transformation response:

Pivot from generic mass market product distribution to highly individualized, proactive customer engagement models.

Managing the disablers:

Discard outdated demographic segmentation models that fail to capture real time, contextual customer behaviors.

Leveraging the enablers:

Deploy advanced predictive analytics to anticipate financial needs and automate personalized product recommendations.

Dimension four: Ecosystem orchestration

Shifting from internal build strategies to active innovation engines that partner with the external technology ecosystem.

The historical strategy of building all technological capabilities entirely in-house is no longer viable. The pace of digital innovation far exceeds the internal development capacity of even the most well-resourced incumbent banks. Persisting with a closed loop development model results in slow time to market, inflated costs, and a significant competitive disadvantage against digital native challengers.

Organizations should consider transitioning their operational mindset from that of an isolated manufacturer to an active ecosystem orchestrator. This requires developing robust open application programming interfaces to seamlessly integrate with external financial technology providers, niche startups, and alternative payment gateways. By intelligently curating external innovations and integrating them into their core service offerings, traditional institutions can dramatically accelerate product deployment and access entirely new revenue streams.

How is your organization adapting to shifting customer behaviors and the systemic decline of physical cash?

> ***"Given that the organization handles cash and cash in society is declining, the vision involves exploring digital payment technology, point of sale, and payment gateways."***
>
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Logistics | USA

Transformation response:

Transition from closed proprietary development to highly collaborative, open ecosystem integration.

Managing the disablers:

Overcome the internal cultural resistance that incorrectly views third party technology partnerships as a threat to institutional control.

Leveraging the enablers:

Implement highly secure, open application programming interfaces to facilitate rapid integration with external service providers.

The partner for the hybrid journey

Securing the strategic support required to navigate the four transformation battlegrounds successfully.

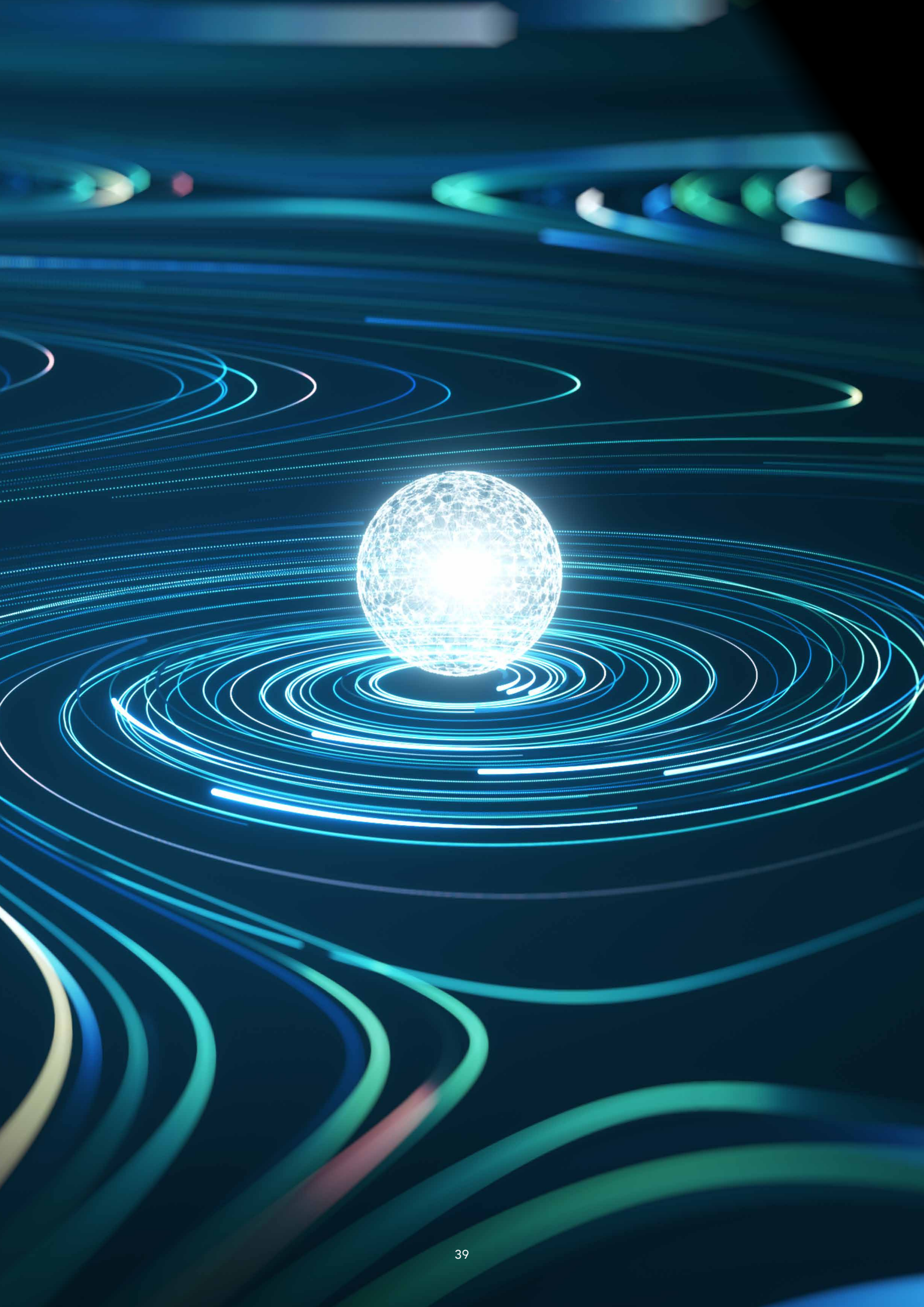
Executing a comprehensive transformation across legacy architecture, risk governance, customer experience, and ecosystem integration is an immensely complex undertaking. Very few financial institutions possess the internal resources or the highly specialized digital talent required to manage these transitions concurrently. Attempting to navigate this volatile journey in isolation significantly increases the risk of operational disruption and strategic failure.

To secure their market position for the coming decade, leaders should consider engaging with strategic technology partners who possess deep industry expertise and proven implementation frameworks. A capable partner provides the necessary objective perspective to identify structural disablers while supplying the advanced engineering capabilities required to build a resilient, future ready enterprise capable of thriving in any scenario.

How do executive boards typically evaluate the progress of complex, long-term transformation programs?

> ***"The board of directors is very much focused on the quarter, they are going to want to hear about success, right, and I do not think we are going to want to focus on what did not work."***
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Logistics | USA

Engaging a strategic technology partner provides the objective perspective and advanced engineering capabilities required to navigate complex, concurrent transformation programs safely.

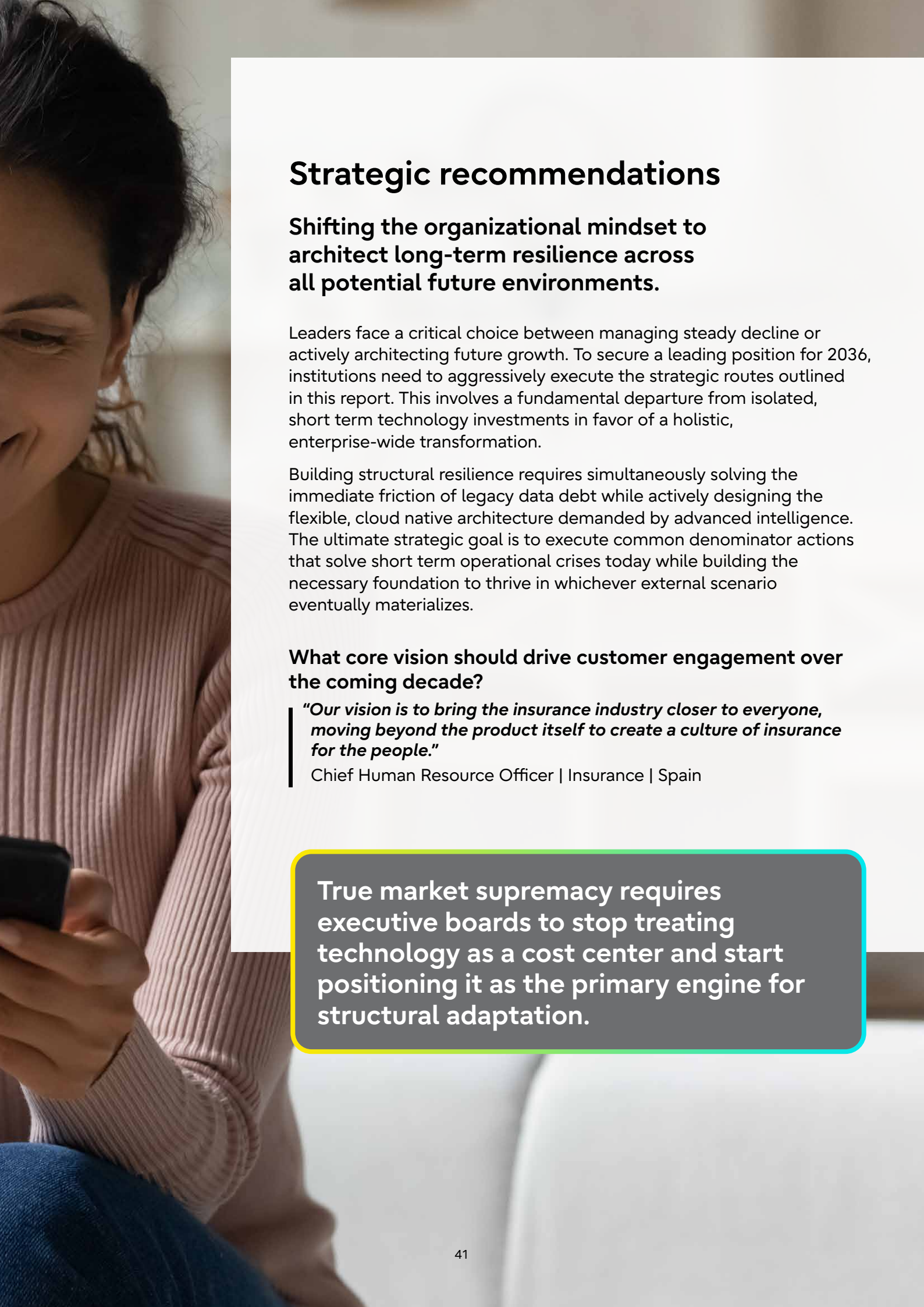


Section

4

Transformation imperatives

Executing the critical strategic recommendations required to transition from operational survival to market supremacy.



Strategic recommendations

Shifting the organizational mindset to architect long-term resilience across all potential future environments.

Leaders face a critical choice between managing steady decline or actively architecting future growth. To secure a leading position for 2036, institutions need to aggressively execute the strategic routes outlined in this report. This involves a fundamental departure from isolated, short term technology investments in favor of a holistic, enterprise-wide transformation.

Building structural resilience requires simultaneously solving the immediate friction of legacy data debt while actively designing the flexible, cloud native architecture demanded by advanced intelligence. The ultimate strategic goal is to execute common denominator actions that solve short term operational crises today while building the necessary foundation to thrive in whichever external scenario eventually materializes.

What core vision should drive customer engagement over the coming decade?

> ***"Our vision is to bring the insurance industry closer to everyone, moving beyond the product itself to create a culture of insurance for the people."***
>
> Chief Human Resource Officer | Insurance | Spain

True market supremacy requires executive boards to stop treating technology as a cost center and start positioning it as the primary engine for structural adaptation.

The common denominator action plan

A unified strategic playbook detailing the immediate steps required to build operational resilience for any future scenario.

While the exact nature of the future operating environment remains unpredictable, there are specific, highly effective actions that yield positive results regardless of which scenario materializes. These common denominator actions focus entirely on removing structural barriers and establishing a highly adaptable technological foundation.

By prioritizing clean data architectures, flexible microservices, and rigorous governance protocols, organizations can insulate themselves against sudden market shocks. Executing this unified plan provides the necessary agility to pivot rapidly, ensuring the institution remains highly competitive whether the future is dominated by global mega banks or a fragmented digital splinter net.

True market supremacy requires executive boards to stop treating technology as a cost center and start positioning it as the primary engine for structural adaptation.

What fundamental objective should guide your digital service strategy?

> ***"The mission is to give the client what they need in a way they want to consume it."***
>
> Chief Information Officer | Financial Services / Retail Banking | UK

Strategic playbook:

- **Focus on:** Accelerating digital core renovation to establish a unified data architecture capable of supporting advanced automation.
- **Focus on:** Cultivating active ecosystem partnerships to rapidly integrate external innovations and expand digital service capabilities.
- **Move away from:** Maintaining expensive, rigid legacy systems that drain technology budgets and actively stifle agile product development.
- **Move away from:** Relying entirely on proprietary, internal development cycles that fail to keep pace with digital native challengers.

How Fujitsu can help:
The partner for the hybrid world

Leveraging Uvance to navigate the complex journey from legacy operations to future market leadership.

The analysis highlights a clear execution challenge for financial services organizations. To move from strategic intent to sustainable impact, institutions must modernize their digital core, improve data quality and trust, strengthen AI governance, develop effective ecosystem partnerships, and build operating models able to adapt across multiple future scenarios. These are not isolated technology initiatives; they require coordinated transformation across architecture, operating model, risk and compliance, customer engagement, and delivery capability.

Successfully executing these strategic imperatives demands more than internal ambition. It requires an experienced technology partner capable of orchestrating complex, enterprise wide change while managing execution risk and operational resilience.

Uvance provides comprehensive consulting, agile solutions, and advanced technological capabilities required to accelerate this transition safely. By combining deep industry expertise with a robust ecosystem of global partners, Fujitsu enables financial institutions to systematically dismantle legacy constraints while deploying secure, cloud native architectures for the future. From establishing rigorous artificial intelligence governance frameworks to delivering hyper personalized customer experiences, Fujitsu serves as a critical enabler, helping organizations convert strategic priorities into coordinated, executable action across the enterprise.

How do you measure progress during a long-term transformation program?

> ***"Our progress is tracked against a five-year timeline that is updated annually."***
>
> Senior VP / Chief Risk Officer | Financial Services / Risk | Japan

Engaging a strategic partner like Fujitsu provides the necessary technological and consulting leverage to execute this common denominator action plan and secure structural advantage for 2036.

References

Fujitsu Technology and Service Vision

The evolving story of Fujitsu insights into the future, updated annually and covering the Fujitsu approach to the main issues raised in the CxO survey.

global.fujitsu/en-global/about/vision

Profile of respondents:

The insights in this report are derived from in depth interviews with a diverse panel of C-level executives representing the spectrum of the financial services industry, from global systemically important banks (G-SIBs) to agile WealthTech challengers.

Demographics of C-suite participants:

- **Financial Services / AI:**
  Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer | Canada | Scotiabank | $5bn - <$10bn Revenue
- **Financial Services / Risk:**
  Senior VP / Chief Risk Officer | Japan | Citibank | >$20bn Revenue
- **Financial Sector / Insurance:**
  Chief Human Resource Officer | Spain | Zurich Santander | $500m - <$1bn Revenue
- **Financial Services / Retail Banking:**
  Chief Information Officer | UK | Metro Bank | $100m - <$500m Revenue
- **Financial Services / Logistics:**
  Chief Information Officer | USA | Loomis | $1bn - <$5bn Revenue
- **Financial Services / WealthTech:**
  Chief Revenue Officer | USA | InvestCloud Inc. | $100m - <$500m Revenue.

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This research was conducted on behalf of Fujitsu by The Business Advantage Group Limited.

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