

## Building a structure for digital success

### How firms can cultivate an organizational structure that accelerates digital transformation

BY JOHN TAFT & RYAN BURWELL

The wealth management industry is going digital – but many firms aren't yet structured for digital success. Our industry saw years' worth of digital transformation in just a few weeks as the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this spring, and we are more reliant on our technology than ever before.

This is a transformative time for our industry. Continued investment in technology will be vital in the years ahead, but dollars alone are not enough to sustain the digital transformation of wealth management we've witnessed over the past few months.

To drive this trend forward, firms must cultivate an organizational structure that not only enables but accelerates the ongoing digital transformation of the wealth management business. In our experience at Baird, a thoughtful, long-view technology strategy is vital to support advisers as they adopt and use technology resources at their disposal. Pairing premier hardware and software solutions with dedicated change management tactics, high-level technology coaching and differentiated support is a powerful combination for advisers and, ultimately enables them to better serve clients' needs.

#### CONVENING TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT RESOURCES

Personalized coaching on essential technology resources is key. Anyone can build the next innovative fintech app or launch a slick client-facing website — but if advisers aren't comfortable using these tools themselves, let alone with

their clients, was the outlay worthwhile? A devoted team that drives the coaching function can help firms tap into their resources' full potential and ensure advisers' connectivity to clients. Technology solutions experts who provide advisers with on-demand, one-on-one coaching services provide the required lift needed in today's rapidly changing environment.

Selecting, implementing and deploying new technology is an achievement for any organization — however, the investment can fall flat without proper change management support. Thoughtful change can drive strategic, lasting adoption across an organization and advance advisers' capabilities. A technology best practices team can champion new technology solutions, lead the acceptance of new platforms and coordinate with other internal teams to develop vital training tools or resources.

Finally, while traditional IT support is essential to any organization's digital efforts, a digital transformation requires a more evolved model. An expert team that not only understands the technology platform, but also understands the firm, the business and the clients can make all the difference. A business-facing, fully licensed technology solutions team can be an extraordinary asset for advisers in speaking the same language while bridging the technology gap.

#### FLEXIBILITY IS ESSENTIAL

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated our industry's reliance on technology. We believe it has also transformed advisers'



ers' expectations around flexibility when it comes to where, when and how they work. In the workplace of the future, it may not be as much of a question of "either/or" — that is, advisers either work in the office or from home — it could be a matter of "both/and." Many advisers may desire the flexibility to both come into the office to work, meet with clients and collaborate with colleagues, and continue to work remote.

No matter what work arrangements look like in the future, firms must provide advisers with exceptional, hands-on support to drive digital success. To retain top talent, full-service, adviser-centric firms need to implement a structure that accelerates digital transformation and offers a new level of flexibility for the advisers.

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