

Evolving for the Customer

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‘A pile of rocks ceases to be a rock pile when somebody contemplates it with the idea of a cathedral in mind.’

This is a rather grandiose statement with which I place the subject of technological development in the same camp as that of Sir Christopher Wren’s architectural genius. Nevertheless, the comparison is justifiable in that to be creative and successful in such a competitive world requires innovative thinking and the drive to turn that thinking into reality and then apply it. Wren did just this in building the highest unsupported dome in the world on St. Paul’s Cathedral, completed in 1708. But unlike great architectural buildings, which remain valid if well-constructed, beautiful and a survivor of the Blitz (St. Paul’s is all of these), technological

architecture must change, flex and even transform to suit its surroundings and accommodate temperamental market demands. If it does not, it will become uncompetitive and obsolete – and only a competitive rival would want that to happen.

MYRIAD has served the investment banking network management community for 10 years, developing along with the function itself to deliver solutions that manage ‘business as usual’ across agent networks. Network management has become ever more diverse and complex, its

importance elevating year-on-year as its territory comes under greater scrutiny as an area of risk. In so doing it has morphed into a risk management operation answerable to external auditors and regulators and it must control the exposure of the bank to non-compliance, inefficiency and threats to client assets.

Just look at the titles of many of the practitioners: Director of Banking Institutions, Banking Services Manager, VP Investor Services, RM Risk Financial Intermediaries. I was titled simply 'Network Manager' before I joined MYRIAD. But then the function was niche and a little sheltered, concerned chiefly with market entry, appointing providers, negotiating fees and on-going due diligence – all very straightforward. Nowadays, Governance, Risk and Control (GRC) are the orders of the day in this space, placing the network managers firmly within the territory of compliance and legal. It is to these surroundings that technology must adapt to stay relevant and valuable.

Defining innovation

If a specialist application such as MYRIAD stayed specialist, we'd come to a dead stop pretty quickly as our target market shrank. It was vital, therefore, that we took on board the changes I have described above and work-shopped to keep the platform in tune with the changing nature of the business, crafting it to serve new areas of financial service, enhancing it to widen its existing capabilities and constantly applying fresh thinking in the pursuit of additional functionality. We can only do this because we have what we need to start with; we are leveraging what we have as a solution to help us re-direct our thinking and apply it to achieve new, desired results and a subsequently re-vitalised platform.

This is a very good definition of innovation and remains a solid foundation upon which to base development, using the established and reliable system, modifying it and adding to it to match market demand, becoming cutting-edge in the process. As financial institutions transform their thinking to stay compliant, reactive and competitive, so must we. The difference is, we have to be proactive, experimental and

innovative as well. No idea is so outlandish that it should not be considered and none are useless unless tested.

All of us have read many of the insightful and thorough articles on regulatory requirements. As a company, we have written a number of pieces which highlight the importance of regulation as an influence upon what we do. Regulation can't be escaped, such is its impact across the entire financial industry. Many firms are starting to view regulatory compliance as a catalyst for business transformation, looking to integrate industry regulation and legislative conformity to achieve operational efficiency. As an extension of this, these firms are upgrading their technological capability, seeing it not as they did – a useful tool to deliver economy of effort – but as a vital component of compliance, regulatory and risk management efforts, to be implemented strategically and logically in line with best practice and company policy.

Accelerating the process

As our financial institutions implement measures to absorb industry legislation into working practice and as they strive to comply with regulation and recommendation, new product and service development is a key concern along with improved technological application. Many must accelerate their programmes to meet the effective deadlines and, naturally, the supporting technology has to accelerate with it. This means bringing innovation to existing services in order to win business and to retain existing clients.

Key mechanisms for accelerating development in the financial industry – and in the corporate world at large – include use of information technology, outsourcing, teamwork and process re-engineering. This collection of business components forms the very 'raison d'être' of MYRIAD, strengths to which we already play and for which we are recognised and valued as part of one very large company's 'living will'. Nevertheless, there's plenty more out there that needs to be addressed as firms struggle to find the right solutions for averting risk, satisfying the regulators and complying with emerging legislation.

Banking services executives, network managers and risk managers struggle not only because there's not enough time in the day to execute BAU and the torrent of compliance and regulation project work running across their desks, but also because, in the majority of cases, they do not have the technological means to tackle all of this effectively in one system which can be accessed anytime, anywhere in the world, securely over the internet. This is where the institution itself can innovate, implementing solutions which do just this and more. To do so can boost operational capacity to the benefit of high-value projects, instilling regulatory confidence in its compliance, exercising ex-

upon it. If it can be wrought from the same material, construct it. If it's the best there is, make it better.

We constantly encounter prospective and existing clients who need us to go the extra mile to give them what they want, and we relish that challenge. This fosters the furtherance of knowledge, boosts our drive to perform and, for our own part, gets us to market. We know that we can get operations and supplier management departments further, faster; to do more with less; to save money and, crucially, to manage risk. MYRIAD has done this through constant innovation since day one. It is a con-

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emplary control over its network of suppliers and clients, saving money and pleasing the shareholders. In all probability, even over a long time – years in fact – and with a fortune chucked at development, an in-house solution will prove neither effective nor persistent. We have seen it happen many times.

Evolution for the customer

The increasingly complex demands and tightening rules imposed upon banks, asset managers and other financial institutions is why business technology providers, if they want to stay attractive to the industry, have to move with these requirements, which they must also properly research and understand. Their service must be developed in sync with the complex and shifting industry environment to provide compatible services which can be slotted into the existing gaps and which will hook up harmoniously with current proprietary operational systems. When done at pace, such development craves innovation and this starts with questioning the existing order. If the product is good or if the potential is there, then build

tinual process that persists through industry change, supporting supplier and client management as these functions increase their influence, front office to back.

If you are possessed of a unique and relevant technological network solution with a highly respected client base, then it's alright to feel positive about your progress. But it's no good being satisfied with what you have – you'll quickly become obsolete. This might be an obvious statement to any business owner, but it is particularly pertinent to the vendor of financial technology as the commercial landscapes of its customers constantly change and become more convoluted and exacting. We, as such a vendor, must accommodate the needs that these qualities engender, providing more choice, covering more ground, supporting the broader, deeper responsibilities of the executives within the industry we serve, striving to make a product more relevant, diverse and agile. This can only be achieved through the process of innovation. It's nothing new – but it is more important now than ever before. ■