

Digital drive: a closer look at Credit Suisse's journey so far

The bank has invested heavily to keep pace with the reality of the digital demands of HNW clients. Its focus is providing the type of compelling experience required today, given the expectations shaped by sites like Facebook and Google.

Francois Monnet understands more than most people working in private banking that the industry can no longer under-estimate the pressing need to make the shift to digital – both culturally and in terms of mind-set – which client demand now requires.

Yet this goes way beyond just creating a snazzy front-end that is more about style than substance.

Instead, it is about rethinking the way the interaction between bankers and clients happens, and the experience for the latter. This transforms the service model across organisation, process architecture and supporting technologies.

For Monnet, as the former chief operating officer for Credit Suisse's private banking business in Asia Pacific, devising a way to deliver on this was all-consuming as part of his mandate to build and spearhead the bank's digital capabilities within Asia Pacific.

In the meantime, a growing number of independent industry reports also started to express the urgency around the need for far-reaching digitisation. It has become increasingly clear, for example, that clients today have a greater propensity to leave an institution which is not able to provide a multi-channel strategy rather than just a bricks-and-mortar offering.

Ultimately, private banks need to enhance the connectivity and collaboration between their front-line staff and clients. And this involves a lot more than content; digital is important for scale, engagement and consistency.

“The digital experiences people want have been elevated by the Facebooks and Googles of this world,” says Monnet, who as of January 2016 is now heading the Greater China Private Banking business for Credit Suisse. And catching up requires a conviction from within the organisation that this is the right path.



FRANCOIS MONNET
Credit Suisse

The new delivery model which the bank already pioneered for the global app it launched first in Singapore in early 2015, already highlighted to its senior

management the reality of the size of the investment in time, people and budget to meet such a commitment to innovation and technology.

LISTENING TO CLIENTS

The starting point for Credit Suisse in mapping out its digital value proposition was defining its target audience, and understanding how these clients use financial services.

This shed further light on the reality that the majority of the bank's private banking clients in Asia Pacific are what Monnet describes as 'validators'.

This means they value advice. More specifically, they want to understand investment opportunities and trade-offs to validate with their advisers, they think in the mid- to long-term and appreciate support in understanding global markets and refining their views and ideas before taking a final investment decision.

This means the bank could break free with confidence from old paradigms. So it began to emphasise the client experience from the outset as the foundation for change.

Credit Suisse then took a bold, client-focused approach to the design and testing of its digital roadmap.

Rather than relying on large project teams comprised of individuals with diverse backgrounds yet limited time to devote to such a demanding project, Monnet decided to rely on a small team.

He trusted the instinct of this group with coming up with new ideas, which then enabled the bank to get to the stage of client usability testing much more quickly.

This feedback process has been a critical component.

"We did not just build our digital private banking capability for our clients; we actually built it with our clients," he says.

For example, in designing, developing and prioritising the features of the first version of the digital banking app, in-depth and one-on-one 'Voice of the Client' sessions were held with around 100 clients across the region.

The final home page of the digital platform, which presents a critical overview of a client's portfolio, is evidence of this type of dialogue.

It was changed 108 times based on client feedback to express some of the content in layman's terms.

THE NEW-LOOK ADVISER

A key underlying philosophy for Credit Suisse is that the relationship manager (RM) stays at the heart of the client experience overall.

"We want the technology to be relationship enhancing," says Monnet. "You need to position that as a multi-channel strategy."

There are two elements to this type of service model. On the one hand, it involves a compelling client experience that meets the need for something which is simple and sticky increasing usage. It also requires a seamless way for clients and RMs to interact - which can be seen in the collaboration suite the bank has created.

The app, as an example, not only redesigns the way in which the bank interacts with its clients, but in terms of how it curates content for and advises them

How digital banking benefits RMs

- **More focused** – RMs have more time to focus on their clients' priorities. Clients are able to manage many administrative activities themselves, freeing up the bankers to focus on value-added interactions with their clients.
- **More effective** – RMs can use the digital channel to deliver ideas and content to clients, and clients have new channels to access key information about their portfolios, ideas and research insights. This means RMs' and their clients are pre-informed prior to in-person discussions.
- **More empowered** – As the number and quality of client touch-points increases, RMs have greater insights into clients' preferences. Also, clients are empowered with the information that is most important to them and with the capacity to trade or to engage the team at the bank, whenever they choose.
- **More engaged** – RMs and clients can leverage multiple collaboration touch-points, via a secure suite of communications channels.

as well. Further, news and content are curated for clients differently.

They have access to watch lists, market data and also Credit Suisse insights through the app, in turn altering the types of discussions these clients have with their RMs.

Plus, an intuitive user interface enables clients to self-serve for basic transactions.

As a result, given that making clients digitally-enabled increases their access to portfolio analytics, research and data, by being able to download information 'on the go', RMs now need to be up-to-speed with what their clients know.

The upshot is a more rigorous and structured approach internally to training the bank's RMs.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Monnet is quick to point out that many people under-estimate the complexity

go online are before 8am, at lunch time, and after 10pm," he explains.

This shows the extent to which a proper digital engagement goes way beyond just an app.

The collaboration suite that Credit Suisse has built, for instance, gives clients the ability to interface with the RM through tools such as electronic messaging, video calls, document sharing and the possibility to annotate on their screens.

This requires a vast amount of behind-the-scenes attention to detail and in-

GETTING THE BACK-END RIGHT

What a comprehensive digital solution also requires is the bank putting in place and maintaining a better coordinated back-end system. "The challenge is how to integrate the front-end into the backbone of the bank," says Monnet.

"This is needed to create, for instance, straight-through processing for transactions, the automatic maintenance of client profiles both upstream and downstream, or a credit system that enables a client to invest online, especially when these systems were never meant to be connected to any kind of client view," he explains.

Yet while banks typically have vast amounts of structured and unstructured data, their databases and other systems within which the information sits often aren't set up in order to communicate with each other. "Digital is all about data," says Monnet. "Banks typically don't have the infrastructure to ensure the data [which is needed] is in the right place. This affects the execution."

Next on the agenda in implementing a digital dimension to the business was addressing cross-border issues.

Merging accounts of clients who are resident in several countries, involving multiple jurisdictions or domiciles, is clearly no quick nor easy task.

Tackling this particular conundrum took Monnet nine months, working full-time with 20 people almost seven days a week to achieve this.

The result is that individuals with a single account, a joint account or a Limited Power of Attorney (LPOA) in another account, can access all three in a different capacity with a single login. ■

"The challenge is how to integrate the front-end into the backbone of the bank."

and amount of work which goes into such a digitisation initiative.

Indeed, perhaps the biggest hurdle in going digital – even more complex than the infrastructure – is the new target operating model that is implied by the direct access the client suddenly has into the bank.

"It changes the way we work, every day," says Monnet.

For example, a truly digital offering should mean a bank's RMs are clued-in, and access to the institution's resources and expertise is around-the-clock. "The times of day when most people

depth discussions over every aspect of the functionality on offer, says Monnet. As an example, the video call feature needs specific assessment and planning.

"We need to ask ourselves questions in relation to how the call will take place," explains Monnet. "Does it take place in an open office, or a booth? Is the RM appropriately attired? Does it happen with a headset? Will the RM be trained to talk into a camera? Is there an audit trail?"

The fact that this is just one of 300-plus features of the bank's platform highlights the enormity of the challenge when considering the shift to digital.