

Temenos' New President for Asia Pacific on the Drive to Boost Engagement Across the Region

Jean-Paul Mergeai is the new President of Asia Pacific, and Middle East & Africa for Temenos, having moved to Singapore in early February from his former Dubai base of seven years, from which he ran the firm's Middle East and Africa operations. Hubbis had the opportunity to 'meet' with him from his new Singapore home recently to learn how he arrived at Temenos, to hear of his role in the region, why he is so enthusiastic about his expanded new role and taking up the reins of the firm in Asia, what his key priorities are for the business in the region, and where he and his wife of 36 years enjoy playing golf. Temenos, he firmly believes, is particularly well-positioned to exploit the exciting wealth management trends evolving apace across the region, and he is enthusiastic about the range of solutions, the scale and ambition to keep its Asia growth trajectory in place, despite the chaos caused by the global pandemic. Mission possible for him, he reports, is to really galvanise the sales effort in the region, to put Temenos where the firm should be at the front and centre of all engagement on digitisation with current and future wealth management clients across Asia Pacific. And in this endeavour, he is starting from a good place, as the Temenos market position in the region is already solid and growing - of the 20 biggest private banks in Asia Pacific, half already use Temenos.

GET IN TOUCH

[View Jean-Paul Mergeai's LinkedIn Profile](#)

[Find out more about Temenos](#)

Temenos is listed on the SIX Swiss Exchange under the ticker 'TEMN' and is a world leader in banking software, partnering with banks and other financial institutions to transform their businesses and stay ahead of a changing marketplace.

Over 3,000 banks across the globe, including 41 of the top 50 banks, rely on Temenos to process both the daily transactions and client interactions of more than 1.2 billion banking customers.

A compelling suite of solutions

Temenos offers cloud-native, cloud-agnostic front office and core banking, payments, fund management and wealth management software products, enabling banks to deliver consistent, frictionless customer journeys and gain operational excellence.

Temenos software is proven to enable its top-performing clients to achieve industry-leading cost-income ratios and returns on equity three times better than the industry average. Temenos clients also invest considerably more of their IT budget on growth and innovation versus maintenance, which appears to prove those banks' IT investment with Temenos, is adding tangible value to their business.

Boosting the banks' proposition

"Putting this simplistically," Jean-Paul explains, "we help banks improve the service that they deliver to their end customers, and we achieve that by significantly improving the speed at which they can deliver products to their clients, the efficiency with which they introduce and manage these products, and we also help make their operations more

customer-centric and efficient, whether it's by improving STP, or by simply allowing them to scale to larger volumes."

He explains that "the Temenos DNA is to serve only one industry since our inception, namely banking and financial services, covering the full array of financial service companies from banks to brokerages, asset managers, fund administration and others."

"We are seeing a rapid and distinct evolution of the wealth management models across different countries in this region. The emerging wealth markets of countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and others are becoming more diverse and advanced, as they improve the type of services they offer to private clients, from the mass affluent through to the HNWIs."

Trend watching

He reports a massive acceleration in digitalisation globally, in every aspect of wealth management activity, whether it is direct access to portfolios from mobiles or tablets, the ability to view performance reports on any digital device, or interacting digitally with the relationship managers or portfolio managers, perhaps taking out a loan or executing market trades.

"We have a range of products to cover so many of these areas, so naturally this acceleration we are witnessing plays to our strengths," Jean-Paul explains. "At the same time, we are seeing a rapid and distinct evolution of the wealth management models across different countries in this region. The emerging wealth markets of countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and others

are becoming more diverse and advanced, as they improve the type of services they offer to private clients, from the mass affluent through to the HNWIs."

Engines of growth

The effect of accelerated adoption of digitalisation and expansion of the wealth industry across more and more markets, and with more banks than ever now expanding into this

segment, is a fertile landscape in which Temenos can operate.

"The result," he reports, "is new opportunities, with growing demand for our technology and expertise. The opportunities exist because we are a global-local company, we've got solid representation across Asia-Pacific, including over 180 staff in Australia, and we're present in 16 other countries in the region, with Singapore our biggest base and our regional headquarters. The impressive coverage means we can spot and then respond to opportunities with our dedicated experts in these markets. Engaging with the banks that really want to talk about wealth with wealth experts, engaging with banks that want to talk about inclusive finance with our microfinance specialists, banks that want to talk about launching a digital attacker or a challenger bank with our cloud



JEAN-PAUL MERGEAI

Temenos

and digital specialists. And on top of that, we are global, so we can leverage our worldwide experience and expertise.”

The Temenos USP

The first pillar of the Temenos USP, Jean-Paul reports, is the specialisation in the financial services industry. “Clients see the expertise, our strict focus, and they are reassured about what is a rather significant customer base we have assembled over the years,” he observes.

Another pillar is the modular approach, meaning the firm can deliver a full front to back solution ranging from origination, onboarding, digital engagements, front office digital user experience platform solution to the backend solution, driven by the firm’s flagship products, Temenos Transact and Temenos Wealth.

“We have seamlessly integrated Temenos Infinity, a digital banking platform that delivers rich customer experiences, an ecosystem of partners and service, and Temenos Transact, a next-generation banking platform which drives automation and brings

Getting Personal with Jean-Paul Mergeai

Jean-Paul hails originally from Arlon, a small town in Belgium that is very close to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, virtually a stone’s throw from the border. He lived and studied there until he attended the University of Liege, where he also first met his wife, also a student at that time, and the couple has now been happily married for some 36 years.

He studied modern languages and linguistics and was then offered a job as an assistant professor on graduating, a chance he jumped at. “My boss was an authority in natural language recognition and artificial intelligence and convinced me to take a second major after I graduated, and learn information management, which at the time were called informatics,” he recalls. “I did that because I wanted to accelerate my knowledge as I was doing research on digital lexicography and expert systems applied to natural languages.”

He then moved to the United States, where he worked for a company that was developing what he describes as “the ancestor to the ancestor to the ancestor” of Google Translate. “So, you can see that I have been very much involved in artificial intelligence from early on in my career, and on my return to Europe later found a great job at Reuters, where I discovered banking technology, that was three decades or so ago, and I have never looked back.”

He worked at Reuters for some 18 years, and then moved to Odyssey Financial Technologies where he initially managed major accounts.

“They then asked me to take over the North American operations at a time when we had acquired xEye, a Canadian software company that was developing a mass affluent solution which was very much complementary to TripleA. When Temenos acquired us in 2010 to boost its Private Banking front office offerings, I moved seamlessly over to the new firm and remained very much focused on private wealth technology. I managed our global wealth business in 2012 and got my first experience in doing business with Asian Private Banks, moving to Dubai, where I had earned experience with Reuters before as head of sales and marketing there.”

A more active sportsman in his earlier years, he loves playing golf, although he admits to finding it somewhat difficult to find available tee times in Singapore. In Dubai, he used to play at the Emirates Golf Club, which is well known for hosting the Desert Classic every year. When he does play, he does so with his wife, who is also a keen golfer.

“I have been known for many years for my enthusiasm in delivering motivational quotes that I use way too often,” he quips, concluding the discussion. “One that I use very often is “you have to dance with the girls or the boys that are at the ball”, applying that mostly with our sales teams in dealing with tricky customers. The underlying moral is that you can only control what you can control, and beyond that, you make the best you can out of the rest.”



products to market faster than ever," he explains. "For somebody who wants a one-stop shop to do absolutely all their operations, they will happily find we can accommodate those needs. And for those that only want elements, or to go step by step, they can also buy only their selected offerings from us."

Offering 'accelerated value'

Jean-Paul elaborates on this point, noting for example that clients who are interested in the digital frontend product line, 'Infinity Wealth', that can be integrated with their backend systems and middle office, so they do not require a full-on transformation of their core banking solutions, and Temenos can deliver what Jean-Paul terms 'accelerated value' to them in that area.

"Banks appreciate our ability to help them focus on their pain points, their value chain and then help them progressively. The result is that often when they experience our solutions and service, they appreciate what we can offer to them beyond the front office, their eyes are open to what we believe is the best core banking technology in the market to evolve further."

He adds that Temenos also sells its Wealth Front Office product formerly called Triple A – originally created by Odyssey Financial Technologies where Jean Paul was a Director before it was acquired by Temenos in 2010. As its front office portfolio management system, offering it both with or without Temenos Transact, Wealth Front Office is a perfect example of modular openness and the integration capabilities with any back-end solution.

Advancing into the new age, step by step

Jean-Paul also comments that some of the firm's competitors offer what he terms a 'more monolithic' approach where customers need to buy everything or nothing at all.

"We like to consider ourselves more in tune, more flexible, offering a very modular, step-by-step approach to customers, allowing them to choose the whole or portions, of our solutions, as they so require," he reports. "Banks appreciate our ability to help them focus on their pain points, their value chain and then help them progressively. The result is that often when they experience our solutions and service, they appreciate what we can offer to them beyond the front office, their eyes are open to

what we believe is the best core banking technology in the market to evolve further."

Incremental gains, proven progress

Jean-Paul reports that since the pandemic hit, the firm has seen robust demand for its entire digital frontend proposition. "We range our solutions from servicing mass affluent customer to UHNWIs, so from a servicing standpoint, our solutions are providing exactly

what a bank would want for direct brokerage or self-trading, to the highly sophisticated discretionary mandates within the world of traditional offshore private banking," he explains.

"Our clients," he elaborates, "especially in emerging markets, like that because it opens up the full gamut of potential for them, and they can add incrementally to their existing offerings, for example adding digital portfolio management to boost their premium banking offering, or moving further into advisory and discretionary, or other more sophisticated services."

Building customer engagement

Now that he is in Singapore, Jean-Paul is forming his own vision of how to approach the Asian markets and plans to impose his own priorities and style on the region. "I come from a multi-faceted background, from sales to implementation and even a developer earlier on," he reports.

High on his list of priorities is the hiring of more sales staff, directly in line with his broader goal of selling Temenos more vigorously in the region. "That is really high on my list of mandates," he reports, "as we need to be even more visible and

present, occupying the minds of wealth managers and the banks and other firms that are accelerating their transformation. Additionally, of course, we need to keep on top of our existing clients, make sure that they're fully up to date about the fast-evolving product lines that we're bringing to the market, and ensure that we are front of mind at all times."

The conversation closes with Jean-Paul reiterating the great potential he sees for the region and how energised he is about the opportunities ahead, as well as about the opportunity to live and work in such a dynamic region. ■

