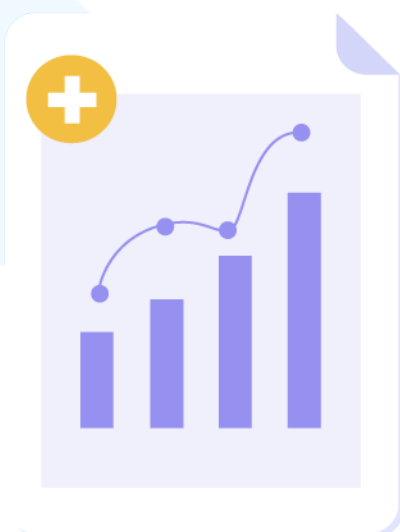


HOW DIGITALIZATION IN FINANCIAL SERVICES OPTIMIZES SECURITY, OPERATIONS, AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

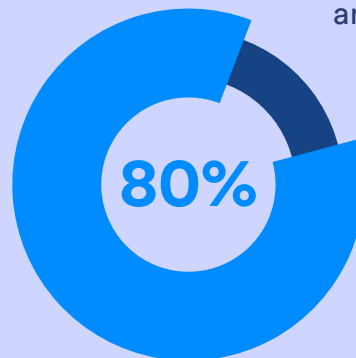


How digitalization in financial services optimizes security, operations, and customer service

Customer expectations for what businesses should provide are at an all-time high — and the financial services sector is not exempt. Customers want interactivity, personalization, data protection, and an innovative customer experience from brands, regardless of their industry, size, or location. In fact, [80 percent of consumers value the customer experience](#) as much as they do an organization's products and services, so it's critical for you to know your target audience in order to provide the kind of experience they expect.



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Providing an excellent customer experience also means building trust with your prospects and clients. You'll develop credibility by being transparent about product availability and costs; offering thought-leadership content that establishes you as a financial services expert; engaging in personalized, consistent communication; and providing convenient, easy-to-use technological tools that make your customers' lives easier.

While confidence in the financial services sector is increasing, it's still not a fully trusted industry. According to the [2022 Edelman Trust Barometer](#), the technology, education, and healthcare sectors are the three most trusted industries, while financial services falls into a neutral category — neither trusted nor distrusted. So, what can be done to improve customers' trust and overall experience with your financial services operation?

Digitalization in financial services can fuel greater brand trust by optimizing security while providing customers with easier access to information. It can also automate processes, workflows, reporting, and data-handling to minimize human error, embed compliant behavior across systems, and reduce costs associated with paper. Lastly, digital tools can provide greater insight on customer trends — leading to customized communications, increased responsiveness, and an increased ability to meet and exceed customer expectations.

Over the next few chapters, we'll discuss ways digitalization in financial services can enhance security, operations, and customer service. We'll also delve into exactly how some financial services subsectors are already using technology and identify ways for your organization to do the same.

Optimize security and trust

Whether you run a bank, insurance company, or accounting firm, if your customers don't trust you, you'll ultimately be unsuccessful. According to [Forrester's Financial Services Customer Trust Index](#), trust is built through brand accountability, dependability, consistency, empathy, transparency, integrity, and competence and is critical for driving loyalty, customer engagement, and profitability.



Source: [Forrester](#)

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Here are a few examples of what digitalization in financial services can help your organization do to strengthen consumer trust over time.

Ensure password protection with SSO or MFA

Similar to organizations within the healthcare, tech, and education industries, many financial services operatives run on hypersensitive, complex data. To protect this information at scale, you need a high level of data security, accuracy, and encryption — like software that enables [single sign-on \(SSO\)](#) and multifactor authentication (MFA).

By issuing one master username and password to each user, SSO stores their data (name and email, for example) in your identity provider's database (e.g., Windows or OneLogin) and confirms it when they sign in. This convenient process allows customers and employees alike to prefill form fields, minimize misspellings and form completion errors, and log in safely and securely.

MFA is another popular security feature that helps protect against cyberattacks and data breaches. This authentication method gives user access only after they've successfully provided two or more pieces of identity proof — such as a password, answer to a security question, pin, or fingerprint.

Apply role-based access control

Another way to simultaneously increase consumer confidence and protect sensitive data is by investing in software with [role-based access control \(RBAC\)](#) and team permissions. These security methods minimize the risk of data breaches and meet compliance requirements by restricting network or document access based on a person's role within the organization or

project. For example, if an employee doesn't need particular information to perform their job or complete their assigned task, they won't be able to edit or even view a file.

Provide industry-leading security features

Consider investing in software that includes most, if not all, of the following security features to prioritize customer and employee data protection:

- **System and Organization Controls (SOC) 2 Type II certification.** This internationally recognized security compliance standard, which requires a comprehensive technical audit that can take up to a year to complete, provides an added layer of data security for your customers and proves that safeguarded data is of utmost importance to your organization.
- **Secure payment processing.** One of the easiest ways to build consumer trust is by providing them with secure, convenient, well-regarded payment processing options. For many consumers, digital payment solutions

— like PayPal, Stripe, and Square — are easier than having to input credit or debit card numbers, resulting in a faster, simpler checkout process.

- **Dedicated cloud servers.** Compared to traditional, shared hosting services, dedicated servers, which run only one specific application or service, better protect your data and provide higher levels of security, offer more storage space, and enhance speed and performance.
- **Electronic signature capabilities.** With [e-signature functionality](#), you can sign and share legally binding online forms and documents in seconds — reducing the risk of identity theft, saving time and money, and shortening sales cycles.
- **Digital time stamps.** By digitally time-stamping your e-documents, you're proving to your customers that their documents — and the data they include — have not been modified in any way since the time stamp was applied. This security feature preserves your

e-documents' legitimacy and confidentiality, which can give your customers greater peace of mind.

- **Automated data deletion.** While collecting data is often the lifeblood of all business improvements, growth, and scalability — you can't fix what you're unaware of, after all — it can also be a huge liability if it's kept around for too long. To clean up your virtual workspace and better protect sensitive, necessary information, [invest in software](#) that enables you to delete antiquated submission data for individual forms, delete all of your account's submission data (per hour, month, year, etc.), and even view and restore them if you delete them accidentally. Data purge programs also help organizations improve their compliance with both data protection and privacy obligations.
- **Data analysis and reporting.** Improve brand trust, and, in turn, profitability by adopting a digital solution that turns customer feedback and intel into actionable, insightful reports.

Minimize the risk of data loss

Digitalization in financial services also enables organizations to reduce the amount of paper they use, which cuts costs, time, and environmental waste while boosting productivity. More importantly, reducing paper files leads to faster data retrieval — say goodbye to unmethodical stacks of paper and rows of filing cabinets — and fewer missing or outright lost documents. Poor document management is not only inefficient and unprofessional, but it can also cause your organization to fall out of regulatory compliance and negatively impact your reputation.



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Enhance compliance monitoring and audits

Powered by AI, compliance automation technology uses built-in compliance monitoring and notification tools to create risk assessment workflows, track and manage the latest industry trends and regulations, and alert personnel of potential security breaches. By helping you maintain thorough records and provide regular compliance training to your employees, compliance automation software removes the guesswork — and stress — of passing audits and helps you avoid fees and penalties.

Improve business operations

In addition to optimizing brand trust and data security, the best financial technology, or fintech, solutions help you automate processes, workflows, and reporting to improve decision making, audit preparation, brand awareness, and communication and collaboration across your organization. Through online forms, no-code apps, and e-signature tools, digitalization in financial services enables you to adapt to changing conditions, [target underserved markets](#), stand out from the competition, and accelerate growth.

Here are some ways fintech tools can minimize human error, streamline administrative tasks, remain compliant, reduce costs, and ultimately revolutionize the way you do business.

Automate processes and approval workflows

While there is nothing inherently wrong with manual processes — like printing and mailing documents, storing paperwork in filing cabinets, and collecting data via physical

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forms — they can affect your bottom line. Buying ink, paper, and stamps, and maintaining printers and shredders can add up, especially for large organizations.

Automation helps reduce these unnecessary costs — and save employees time — by turning everyday processes into workflows. An example is [robotic process automation \(RPA\)](#), an entry-level automation that uses software “bots” to mimic human actions and execute repetitive, mundane tasks quickly with little input.

Using powerful [approval automation software](#), you can authorize or deny form submissions, send customized notification emails, reassign tasks, request additional information, and escalate issues — all with the click of a button. This type of digitalization boosts collaboration, increases productivity, and minimizes backlogs.

Financial services has a reputation as a secure and streamlined industry, as shown in the innovation of customer-facing applications like mobile banking and investment platforms. And according to Nick Bantick, intelligent automation consultant at DigiBlu, an internationally recognized leader in intelligent automation, “This reputation doesn’t always translate to the rest of the business, where there are many opportunities to improve efficiency and auditability.

Digitization and automation of processes is absolutely necessary to match the standard set in the go-to-market applications. Standardization of data is key to efficiency gains and best-practice compliance and at DigiBlu we use a combination of tools, including Jotform Enterprise, to achieve this. The impact on operational efficiency, internal employees, and customer experience is transformative.”

Build code-free apps

Investing in a [no-code mobile app builder](#) is another surefire way to optimize your financial services operations. These ingenious tools help finance professionals of all programming backgrounds create apps that store financial data, keep project collaborators on the same page, track

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Nick Bantick
Intelligent Automation Consultant
DigiBlu

employee expenses, function as a client dashboard, and manage personal finances.

Apps help you improve the user experience, stand out from the competition, better engage with clients and employees, and streamline productivity. Depending on your needs, you can create an app that’s shared with a simple URL, or reach larger audiences in the Apple App Store and Google Play with a [native app solution](#).

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Collect e-signatures

As mentioned above, software with e-signature capabilities can help various financial institutions — banks, insurance companies, and brokerage firms — improve brand trust and data security. [E-signature solutions](#) can also shorten sales cycles and streamline internal processes by allowing you to build and customize reusable contracts and disclosure documents; track, download, and store signed, legally binding documents; and include e-documents in your approval workflows or apps.

The right e-signature platform will even allow you to set expiration dates for your

e-documents — requesting they be signed and returned by a specific deadline. This feature is especially helpful if you're working with a large number of collaborators, routing contracts tied to interest rates or market events, or just need to keep projects moving forward.

Improve brand awareness



Thanks to robust [online form builders](#), you can create and share fully customizable, on-brand client forms, feedback surveys, and other e-documents from the palm of your hand.

Simply choose a ready-made template or build a form from scratch, customize it to match your branding, add form fields and engaging widgets, and share it with your employees or clients via link or embed it on your company website. The best online form builders even integrate with the world's most popular apps — from project management tools to email marketing services — to ensure your brand look and messaging is consistent across emails, your website, display ads, mailers, and client dashboards.

Collaborate and communicate across departments

Workplace collaboration can be stressful enough without having to worry about how you're going to define roles, assign tasks, share documents, and collect and manage data to keep everyone on the same page. Add on-site and remote collaborators to the mix and you've got a recipe for potential miscommunication.

However, if you invest in [shared online workspaces](#), you can help team members collaborate and communicate internally and externally — whether they're working on-site, across town, or out of the country. These solutions allow users to create online teams, set access permissions, and build, share, and edit forms, reports, and contracts to stay connected, maintain compliance, and work smarter, not harder.

Automate reporting

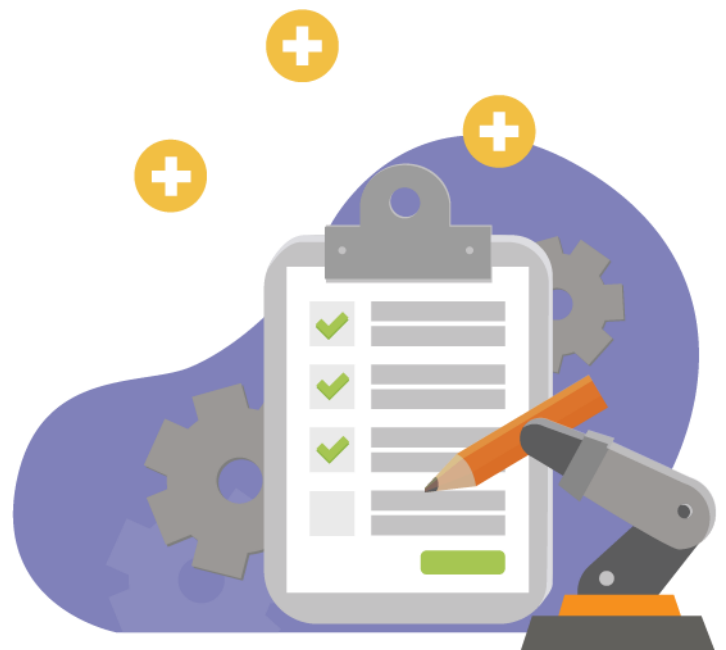
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Say you're considering launching a new financial planning division at your bank but aren't sure where to start. Are your customers primarily interested in wealth accumulation, preservation, or distribution? To find out, send an online survey to some of your most active clients to better understand their financial needs and goals, and whether or not they would be interested in learning about your product offerings.



Once you've collected your data, use a [report builder](#) to convert your survey's responses into polished, visual reports to help you articulate your findings to colleagues and shareholders. In no time, you'll know exactly which financial planning stage your sales and marketing teams should prioritize.

Best of all, with the right reporting software, you'll be able to share your [collected data in real time](#). This gives your entire organization — from sales and customer service to quality assurance and marketing — the information they need to make [informed, relevant, up-to-date decisions](#) about which products to offer and when to launch them.

Elevate the customer experience

Convenience is king for the majority of your target audience — including millennials, who are predicted [to make up 75 percent of the workforce by 2025](#), and the generations expected to benefit from the whopping [\\$84 trillion transfer of wealth](#) that's predicted to

occur in the next 20 years. Financial services institutions with antiquated legacy systems will be unable to provide the quick, seamless customer service experiences necessary for finding and retaining modern clients. Putting off digital transformation will result in lost deals and lost income.

That said, there are some ways digitalization in financial services can help you keep customers top of mind in all aspects of your business.

Create tailored communications

Consumers expect personalization from brands and often favor those that offer engagement and interactivity — as well as high-quality products and services — over those that don't.

These tailor-made experiences are possible with customer segmentation. By delivering personalized messaging to best-fit consumers across a wide variety of advertising channels, you can provide [fast, inexpensive, and accurate services](#) while simultaneously

ensuring key customers feel heard, seen, and valued. [As a result](#), you're more likely to gain long-term customers from your target audience.

Optimize the decision making process

In addition to minimizing errors and backlogs, automating workflows can also give you instant access to accurate, relevant data. This real-time information can help you move away from a product-focused model and instead [embrace flexible pricing](#) to better align with clients' needs and life stages or market conditions. Informed, relevant decision making allows you to focus more on customer relationship management, create more personalized experiences, and boost profitability.

[According to a report by Bain & Company and Mambu](#), for digital banks specifically, "this laser focus on personalized solutions and experiences has led to a 4 to 8 percent growth in revenue over competitors, as well as a dramatic increase in membership."

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Improve digital communications

Fast response times make customers feel important and reduce the likelihood they'll contact you through other channels, which can double your workload. Consistently providing prompt, reliable service can separate you from your competition.

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To help you respond more effectively to your customers, consider investing in tech that allows you to

- **Build easy-to-use forms.** Helps your customers easily get in touch with you through branded client feedback surveys and contact forms that can be easily embedded into your company website.
- **Receive instant notifications when a form submission has been received.** The quicker you learn about a customer issue, the faster you can respond with a solution.
- **Create an FAQ page.** As your organization grows, you'll probably receive many of the same questions over and over again through your forms, so it's a good idea to set up an FAQ page on your website with answers to common questions.
- **Set up autoresponder messages.** When customers submit a feedback or inquiry form, sometimes a simple "we received your message" response with your hours of operation can suffice until you can get back to them. For an even more impressive customer experience, include a link to your website's FAQ page within your autoresponder.

Meet regulatory requirements

Due to the public's ever-growing digital privacy concerns, new laws and regulations have been cropping up over the past few years, including the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) and several [protections](#) enforced by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission.

The GDPR is the world's strictest data privacy and security law, and requires data controllers to properly collect, process, and erase personal information — like name, address, gender, ethnicity, etc. — or be subject to hefty fines. Under the GDPR, if you process data, you must do so according to [seven data protection principles](#).

Part of the GDPR is [the right to be forgotten \(RTFB\)](#), which gives consumers the right to ask organizations to remove their personal data to minimize the risk of data leaks and identity theft. However, an organization only has to erase the data if, for example, it's no longer necessary for the organization to retain the individual's personal data, the organization is using the data for direct marketing that the individual opposes, or the organization has processed the data unlawfully.

By automating customer data management, processing, storage, and deletion, the best financial services solutions and risk assessment tools help you remain compliant with the GDPR, the RTFB, and other major data protection laws and regulations. They also allow relationship managers to [serve clients more efficiently](#), which results in higher revenue and lower operational costs.

Leverage shared workspaces and databases

While workplace collaboration can have its challenges (e.g., undefined roles and expectations, employee rivalries, office politics), with the right software, it can streamline customer service and optimize help desk training within your financial institution.

By giving managers access to employee training checklists, progress quiz and test templates, and trainer/trainee feedback forms, you can ensure consistent service levels across your organization. Shared workspaces and databases can also help your employees learn how to work together toward common goals, navigate different personalities and challenges, and develop active listening skills, which can all translate into successful customer service.

Financial services impact

Technology can help you grow and scale your business faster than ever before. Today, a CPA, financial adviser, and tax attorney can use a comprehensive software solution — jam-packed with a wide variety of collaboration tools, features, and integrations — to ensure their clients get the best possible service experience from beginning to end.

For a better understanding of how you can use tech in your specific subsector, check out how three types of financial institutions are leveraging digital productivity tools, e-signature software, and shared online workspaces to improve their operational efficiency.

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BANKS

With the right software, creating, tracking, and storing application forms — like credit card applications, home loans, and bank account registrations — has never been easier.

INSURANCE

Insurance firms are using technology to build easy-to-use forms, streamline processes, collect data, and connect with popular third-party platforms to improve transparency.

ACCOUNTING

From sprawling government agencies to small tax preparation firms, accounting professionals leverage tech to build and design tax forms, collect client data, authorize payments, and sign e-documents.

How to implement digitalization

As a financial services professional, you know the importance of proper planning. Whether your client is a recent college graduate who needs assistance creating a budget, a small business owner who is setting up payroll for the first time, or an older investor looking to diversify their portfolio, you know how imperative it is to first gather data. The more information you receive from your clients — including bank account balances, goals, needs, and expectations — the more effectively you can advise them.

Investing in tech for your own financial services organization follows the same process. By sitting down with your key executives and stakeholders; identifying a technology vision and implementation timeline; and conducting proper research on available options, you'll be better equipped to find the best solution for your business.

Five critical steps for a digitalization strategy



1. **Collect feedback to validate digitalization objectives**



2. **Establish a C-suite vision**



3. **Create a realistic roadmap**



4. **Adopt a comprehensive software solution**



5. **Collect feedback regularly**

To introduce more digitalization within your financial services organization, consider the following process.

1. Collect feedback to validate digitalization objectives



Look for ways to optimize existing workflows to cut costs, boost productivity, and improve the customer experience — even if your current processes aren't necessarily defective.

The most effective way to do this is by first collecting feedback from all your employees regarding what software they currently use and whether it helps or hinders their productivity. You should also conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to identify which challenges your departments are facing so you can look for technology that will address them.

2. Establish a C-suite vision



Managers and C-suite executives are often hesitant to embrace new software because, in addition to how much it can cost, it can also be difficult to understand and adopt — especially if your organization has a wide variety of workers with different programming

backgrounds, levels of work experience, and industry expertise. However, no matter which tech solutions you ultimately adopt, if you aren't planning to use them in the C-suite, a successful digitalization rollout and implementation process company-wide is unlikely. Prioritize digitalization from the top down, so employees believe these leaders support your organization's technology goals and recognize their value.

Fortunately, no-code solutions can help with this critical transition. With drag-and-drop functionality, automated reporting and notifications, and collaborative workspaces, you'll be able to make the digitalization rollout more streamlined for everyone involved.

3. Create a realistic road map

Once your employees and C-suite executives are on board, your organization's digital transformation can take off.



To avoid unnecessary stress and overspending, create a plan with realistic goals and time frames — one that matches your annual objectives,

employee feedback, budget, existing client list, and lead-generation plans. Most importantly, remember that building a tech toolkit is a marathon, not a sprint.

4. Adopt a comprehensive software solution



In addition to investing in software that offers many, if not all, of the features we've outlined thus far, you should look for a system that connects with other platforms.

If the platform you have your eye on doesn't include customer relationship management (CRM), email marketing, approval workflow, or app-building functionality, it should at least be able to integrate with solutions that do. This will enhance security, operations, and the customer experience across your organization.

5. Collect feedback regularly



Finally, even once you've chosen, installed, and implemented your financial services software, your work isn't done.

For your organization's digital transformation to be successful, you

need to regularly check in with your managers and employees, use the software yourself, and distribute and analyze feedback surveys. If the software is too slow, sophisticated, confusing, or limited, you need to know so you can make the proper adjustments. Check in with each department once a month or quarter, as well as each time you introduce new software.

Digitalization is key for growth

For optimal success within your financial institution, outdated systems that can't share information and siloed workspaces are no longer an option. They put your organization at risk of losing customer trust and are more expensive and time-consuming to operate.

Financial services firms that embrace digitalization can bolster security, streamline operations, and enhance customer service. Now that you know more about what it takes to implement fintech into your organization — and understand the best solutions and features on the market — you're more than equipped to make critical technology changes that can boost your productivity and profitability year after year.