FStech Conferences

The Future of FinTech

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

23 June 2026

Hilton London Tower Bridge

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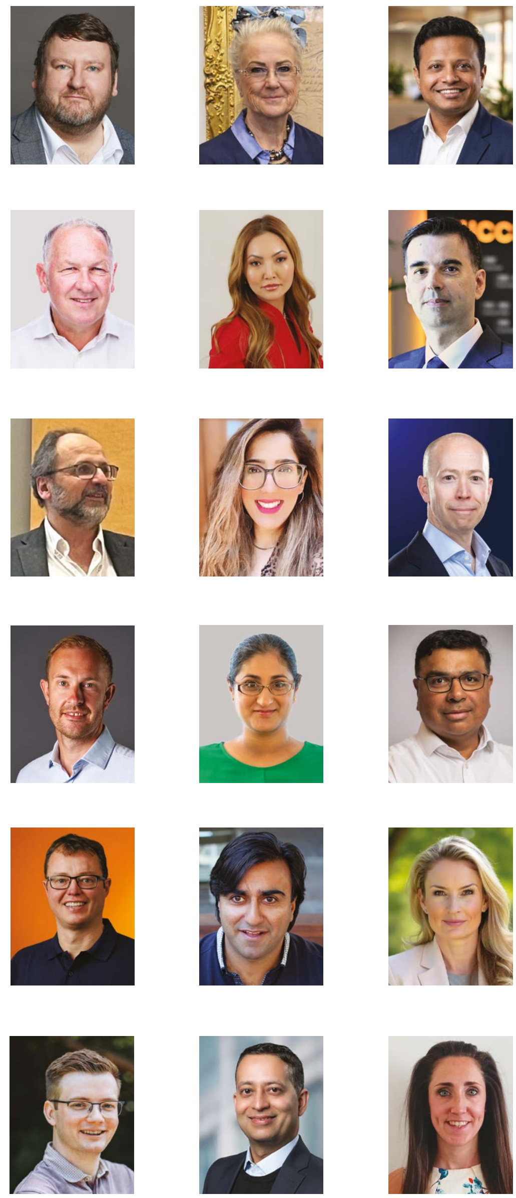

Introduction

Jonathan Easton,
Editor, FStech

One of the privileges of my role is the opportunity to speak with technology leaders, innovators and decision-makers from across financial services throughout the year. Those conversations reveal an industry that is evolving at a remarkable pace, but also one that is becoming increasingly interconnected.

The challenges facing financial institutions can no longer be viewed as isolated technology projects or individual regulatory initiatives. AI, payments, operational resilience, customer experience, talent, governance and transformation are now deeply intertwined, requiring organisations to think holistically about how they invest, operate and compete.

That reality shaped The Future of FinTech 2026. Rather than focusing on individual technologies, this year's conference explored how institutions can bring together strategy, technology and execution to build organisations that are resilient, adaptable and ready for the next phase of change.

Across the agenda, one message emerged consistently: technology has matured from an enabler of business strategy into one of its defining forces. Artificial intelligence is changing not only how financial institutions operate internally, but also how customers research products, interact with providers and make financial decisions. Payments continue to become faster, more connected and increasingly global. Operational resilience has expanded beyond traditional disaster recovery to encompass systemic risk, third-party dependencies and the resilience of increasingly complex digital ecosystems. At the same time, digital transformation has become a continuous organisational capability rather than a programme with a defined endpoint.

Yet technology alone is not enough. Many of the most insightful discussions throughout the conference centred on leadership, culture and people. Accessibility is rightly being recognised as a competitive advantage rather than simply a compliance obligation. Diverse technology teams are producing better products and reducing risk. The UK's digital skills challenge demands sustained investment in talent if organisations are to fully realise the opportunities presented by AI and emerging technologies.

The UK continues to occupy a leading position in global financial technology, supported by a world-class financial services sector, a thriving innovation ecosystem and a regulatory environment that increasingly encourages responsible innovation. However, competition is intensifying. Institutions must deliver faster innovation while maintaining customer trust, regulatory compliance and operational resilience. Success will depend less on adopting individual technologies than on connecting them effectively across the enterprise.

This brochure captures many of the ideas, insights and perspectives shared throughout The Future of FinTech 2026. I hope it provides a valuable reflection on the discussions that took place and, more importantly, helps inform the conversations and decisions that will shape financial services in the years to come.

FStech Conferences

The Future of FinTech

Agenda

08.30 - 09.15: Registration and refreshments

09.15 - 09.20: Chairman's welcome

- **Jonathan Easton**, *Editor*, FStech

09.20 - 09.50: Keynote speaker: Digital Accessibility as a Competitive Advantage

- **Dr. Chris Bailey**, *Senior Digital Accessibility Manager*, HSBC
- **Adi Latif**, *Accessibility and Inclusive Design Consultant*

09.50 - 10.20: Presentation – The AI-Savvy Customer: Is your business ready? Sponsored by Transmit Security

- **Adam Desmond**, *VP of EMEA,* Transmit Security

10.20 – 11.00: Panel – Next-gen payments: Real-time, cross-border, interoperability and the future of digital money, sponsored by ACI Worldwide

- **Vijay Lulla**, *Executive Director*, EMEA, Head Cross Border Payments, J.P. Morgan Payments
- **Jeremy McDougall**, *Strategic Solution Consulting Director*, EMEA, ACI Worldwide
- **Vibhor Narang**, *Lead*, Payment and Treasury Solutions, Transaction Banking Europe, Standard Chartered

11.00 - 11.30: Coffee break

11.30 - 12.00: Beyond the Perimeter: Building Genuine Operational Resilience in an Age of Systemic Risk, sponsored by Cockroach Labs

- **Matthew Gardner**, *Staff Sales Engineer*, Cockroach Labs

12.00 - 12.40: Panel – Digital transformation and operating models: Aligning strategy, technology, culture, and change delivery at scale

- **Janthana Kaenprakhamroy**, *CEO*, Tapoly
- **Sagar Mandal**, *Head of Marketing Technology*, EMEA & APAC, Ameriprise Financial Services
- **Mario Marić**, *Deputy Executive Director*, CRM, Privredna banka Zagreb, Intesa Sanpaolo Group

12.40 - 13.10: Tokenisation and the Future of Financial Services

- **Gilles Chemla**, *Professor of Finance*, Imperial College Business School

13.10 - 14.10: Lunch Break

14.10 – 14.40: Panel – Shaping the bank of the future: From purpose to performance, sponsored by Rackspace Technology

14.40 – 15.20: Fireside Chat – Engineering equity: Diversity as a driver of technical innovation and operational performance

- **Vicky Soden**, *Chief Executive Officer*, Women in Banking and Finance (WIBF)

15.20 – 15.50: Keynote speaker: Untapped Digital Talent: The £3 billion opportunity

- **Caroline Haines**, *Vice Chair of Policy and Resources*, The City of London Corporation

15.50 – 16.20: Chairman's closing remarks, quiz and end of conference

16.20 – 17.00: Networking drinks reception

Keynote - HSBC

Digital accessibility as a competitive advantage

In this keynote Dr Chris Bailey, senior digital accessibility manager at HSBC, said HSBC wants to "be the world's most digitally accessible bank" by becoming "the bank of choice for disabled and neurodivergent customers" and "the employer of choice for disabled and neurodivergent talent".

He argued that inclusive design can strengthen customer relationships, support innovation and unlock access to an underserved global market.

Bailey said accessibility is becoming increasingly important as financial services firms respond to demographic change, particularly an ageing population and one of the largest intergenerational wealth transfers in history.

"This is no longer a niche audience," Bailey said. "Worldwide, there are approximately 1.2 billion people with disabilities."

As customers grow older, many experience combinations of visual, hearing, and motor impairments, making accessible digital services increasingly important. Bailey argued that organisations prioritising accessibility will retain customers and differentiate themselves from competitors.

Education has also been a priority. Alongside specialist training for developers and testers, HSBC has made accessibility learning available to more than 210,000 employees and launched apprenticeship programmes specifically for disabled and neurodivergent candidates.

"There is nothing more powerful than bringing individuals with lived experience into the workplace," Bailey said. "You're no longer talking about a set of standards or a theoretical person. You're talking to a colleague in the room."

Bailey added that user research is helping HSBC move beyond compliance towards genuinely inclusive experiences. He highlighted the bank's latest ATMs, which underwent multiple rounds of testing with disabled customers, as an example of identifying accessibility issues in the design phase.

AI is also beginning to play a larger role in accessibility. Bailey pointed to work in Hong Kong, where HSBC is using AI-generated sign language to make digital services more accessible in a market with relatively few qualified interpreters. However, he stressed that technology must always complement, rather than replace, engagement with disabled users.

To demonstrate what accessible design looks like in practice, accessibility and inclusive design consultant Adi Latif demonstrated how he uses "game changing" AI technology to navigate the world.

He showed how he navigates HSBC's website using the screen reader on his iPhone to independently access banking services. He also showed another bank's website and pointed out features which meant it was hard for him to navigate.

Latif, who lost his sight in his teens to a degenerative eye condition, said before the technology someone had to read his bank statements to him and even the PIN number for his debit card which meant that this information was available to him securely or confidentially.

"Accessibility isn't a one-and-done," he said. "It has to be business as usual and embedded in your organisation, so it's not forgotten."

Latif added that while something could be technically accessible, it could be a "pain in the arse to use".

Bailey encouraged organisations to work directly with disabled communities throughout the design process, adding that one principle has guided HSBC's approach throughout its accessibility journey: "Nothing for us without us."

Transmit Security

The AI-Savvy Customer: Is your business ready? (Sponsored by Transmit Security) Adam Desmond, VP of EMEA, Transmit Security

AI is already having a transformative impact on the ways consumers interact with the world. Adam Desmond, vice president EMEA at Transmit Security, explored how agentic AI could forever change what consumers expect of financial services organisations, and how these organisations approach core operations such as cybersecurity.

To open the session, Desmond briefly discussed the ways in which AI is already shaping his personal life, from helping him book holidays to assisting his son with exam preparation.

AI is rapidly becoming the standard route for consumers, he noted, with a recent Harvard study finding 50 per cent of US adults use generative AI in their personal life. In the near future, he said, consumers will transition from using AI for answers to empowering agents to complete tasks in their personal life.

"It's gone from recommendations, opinions, and decisions to actually the transaction," Desmond said.

As an example, Desmond said the 47 per cent of people who use AI to shop could soon get their smart devices to order their entire supermarket shop and arrange delivery based on a description of planned recipes. Desmond argued that entering this world will lead to the collapse of traditional web channels and make organisational UIs invisible to consumers.

To meet this moment and ensure they keep up with the competition, Desmond said organisations will need to make their websites AI-ready. He added brand loyalty will erode as consumers rely on agentic recommendations, and that FinTech can take advantage of this new agentic channel because of its high-volume, rules-based approach.

"There's lots of structure in place, so it's easy for the agents to scroll through and look for the things that you're interested in, whether that's the FX rate or mortgage rates or the high saving account," he said.

"You could end up with agents moving your life savings from one savings account to another savings account, to another savings account every month as the rate changes."

Those that can help facilitate this customer experience will benefit from the shift to an agentic world, Desmond added.

But polling the audience by show of hands, he noted that very few currently have a good idea of their agentic traffic and highlighted this as a serious risk.

Fraudsters, he said, are using AI to carry out identity attacks on a greater scale than ever before. Whether through frontier models or advanced open-source models, agentic AI is lowering the bar for unskilled attackers to carry out damaging fraud campaigns.

To keep up in this environment, he advised leaders to embed true identity security in their workflows and to flesh out their cyber policies. Beyond simply tracking agentic traffic, Desmond suggested businesses should know the intentions of each agent in their environment, too.

"So what type of agent is it, is it a good agent, a bad agent, and do you want to allow access to that?"

None of this is theoretical: Desmond made reference to one of Transmit Security's retail customers which is already seeing 30 per cent of its traffic come from agentic AI and that he expects businesses to see 70 to 80 per cent figures in the near future.

"Those that do nothing, they're likely to be in the papers because of breaches," Desmond predicted.

Next-gen payments: Real-time, Cross-border, interoperability and the future of digital money

The move to the ISO 20022 messaging standard has created new opportunities for extracting value from payments. At the same time, an increasing number of financial institutions are exploring how tokenisation, digital currencies and programmable payments could fit into future financial ecosystems.

This session examined the practical realities of cross border instant payments, the opportunities presented by the new standard and the role of digital money in building resilient and interoperable payment ecosystems.

Jeremy McDougall, strategic solution consulting director, EMEA, at ACI Worldwide, noted that while instant payment is a mature technology in the UK, it is relatively new in Europe. However, he said, mandates should not be the deciding factor in providing secure and efficient payments, whether or not they are instant.

Vijay Lulla, executive director, EMEA, and head of cross border payments at J.P. Morgan Payments, agreed and said that the real-time expectation should not be there for every transaction.

"There's a lot of hype around it, but clients want certainty more than speed," he added. "Thirty minutes is fine for businesses, and honestly for most retail clients. Payments should be at the speed of need, not necessarily instantaneous."

On how ISO 20022 can be used as an advantage for financial institutions, Standard Chartered's payment and treasury solutions lead for transaction banking, Europe, Vibhor Narang, said that the amount of data that could be transferred through the standard was a major boon.

"There is always a lot of information that needs to be processed alongside a payment," he said. "ISO 20022 sends 10 times more data than a normal SWIFT message. Cross-border payments have always been treated as two separate domestic payments, leading to fragmented compliance. This standard changes that."

The new ISO standard allows senders to add various additional reference codes to payments, which Narang said was "incredibly useful".

McDougall added that the standard should help to reduce false positives when payments are checked for compliance and fraud.

"An example would be a business based in California that's called the Cuba Bar and Grill. Payments from it will always be delayed because the sanctions system would pick up Cuba, which is a sanctioned country, and it would then fall for a false positive. Under the specific fields and tags the ISO 20022 would provide, it would say that the country of origin is the US, so they wouldn't be too concerned about the business name."

The conversation then turned to payments programmability, which Narang noted already exists in the form of direct debits and standing orders. Programmability's main boon, he argued, is to reduce manual intervention, freeing up corporate treasurers to take care of strategic and exceptional payments rather than the regular day-to-day ones.

Tokenisation makes this easier, he added, as it allows payments to be set up to send automatically once certain conditions are met, even if the transaction occurs out of regular cutoff times.

Lulla agreed that the rollout of tokenisation would lead to further innovations in programmability, but cautioned that they still have their limitations.

"We still need fiat at the end of the day," he said.

Cockroach Labs

Beyond the Perimeter: Building Genuine Operational Resilience in an Age of Systemic Risk (Sponsored by Cockroach Labs)

Legislation such as the Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA) has put a new light on resilience, requiring financial services organisations to carefully consider their critical operations and interdependencies. In this presentation Matthew Gardner, staff sales engineer at Cockroach Labs, explained how leaders should think about resilience and what architectural decisions institutions need to make today to achieve resilience without compromising customers, operations, or regulatory obligations.

Gardner opened the talk by acknowledging the requirements of DORA, which force organisations to carefully consider the value and operations of their third-party providers and how they can ensure the uptime of their critical infrastructure.

None of this is optional, Gardner reminded attendees, with fines for non-compliance ranging from €2 million to €10 million or up to 10 per cent of global annual revenue.

Eight of the 64 articles within DORA specifically refer to resilience, Gardner said, covering peak transaction requirements, systems continuity, and contractual agreements.

To put this in perspective, he gave the example of an organisation that accepts 1,000 online transactions on an average business day that may face dramatic user spikes during shopping events.

"What happens when Black Friday comes along and you've got to handle 10,000 transactions per second?" Gardner asked. "Is your existing database able to handle that? Have you verified that you're able to scale out and accept additional throughput? Because the reality is, if you can't, then you're not necessarily able to meet DORA."

Availability is just the tip of the iceberg, Gardner said. Beneath it lie approaches such as multiple data centre deployment, observability, ongoing maintenance and patching, and failover. As a bare minimum, organisations should know if they can "survive someone else's failure" and this means carefully assessing service level agreements.

DORA doesn't specify how much uptime organisations should seek, whether 99.5 or 99.999 per cent, but it does expect organisations to know their own minimums. Beyond regulatory requirements, Gardner added, many organisations are still lagging behind modern resilience expectations.

"Two per cent of companies said they can resolve an unplanned outage in less than 60 minutes - a lifetime in online transaction processing. If you can't resolve an outage in 60 minutes, you're going to go bust."

Going forward, Gardner said, businesses have to think about fighting outages as fighting for productivity, shipping new features, and meeting customer demand.

This will require leaders to ask themselves which services matter the most to customers, which third parties are critical, which SLAs their topology qualifies for, what failure tests they've verified, and whether they can prove their service meets the tolerance limits of their SLA.

Ultimately, he said that successful companies are "proactive, not reactive," baking uptime into their model rather than accepting that outages will happen, to put them in good stead to deal with emerging technologies.

"In the next five years, there's going to be unprecedented amounts of new applications, new agentic AI attack vectors, and even just demand for your systems," he concluded.

Panel

Digital transformation and operating models: Aligning strategy, technology, culture and change delivery at scale

As new developments in digital technologies transform how businesses operate, challenges emerge about modernising core platforms, industrialising data and AI and reshaping decision rights against a backdrop of regulatory and cost pressures.

This panel explored how leaders can design future-ready operating models that connect strategy with delivery and embed product-centric ways of working.

For Mario Marić, deputy executive director of CRM at Privredna banka Zagreb, part of Intesa Sanpaolo Group, future evolutions in operating models will be "much more product oriented".

"What I want to see is commitment from product owners to own products from beginning to end and take responsibility for development in the future as well," he added.

Sagar Mandal, head of marketing technology EMEA and APAC at Ameriprise Financial Services, suggested viewing institutional transformation as a tree.

"The roots are the fundamentals of data and core capabilities. The trunk is the decision making and governance capabilities and lastly, and most importantly, comes the experience, the fruit. The best part is, it will keep changing with the times and adapting to the landscape around it."

Janthana Kaenprakhamroy, chief executive at business insurance provider Tapoly, noted the importance of agility, which she said has been compounded by the evolution of AI.

Another core part of digital transformation is ensuring that initiatives actually transform into measurable outcomes. Mandal said that commitment to projects impresses shareholders, while tying KPIs to metrics ensures projects can prove their worth.

Kaenprakhamroy added that when designing projects, it is important to consider a range of options to reach targets.

"For example, if you're trying to build a website and capture more traffic, you need to be able to justify the cost of that against the increased sales. It may be that there is a better way to do it. Maybe AI could build the website in 30 minutes end-to-end with a lower cost."

Corporate culture is also an important enabler of modernisation and transformation. This starts at the top, Marić said.

"It's much easier to change behaviour than culture. It is simple to say to people that they need to use LLMs in their daily work and then realise two or three months later that the bill is too high, but real cultural shift starts with innovation and experimentation."

For Kaenprakhamroy, the simplest way to ensure senior leaders are on board with experimentation is to replace them if they are not. She added it is important to develop clear use cases metrics that are tailored to each group's specific focus, which for boards is profit.

Mandal said it is important to ensure that clients stay with the bank long term by maintaining trust.

"Trust is intangible, but it must be maintained. The way you do this is ensuring that communication is consistent and customers are assured of your stability. That's where you make the money, right?"

Gilles Chemla (Imperial College Business School)

Tokenisation and the Future of Financial Services
Gilles Chemla, Professor of Finance, Imperial College Business School

Tokenisation is a point of increasing interest for financial regulators, banks, asset managers, and financial market infrastructure providers. Within this category stablecoins, a form of digital asset pegged to a real-world asset, could play a particularly important role as they provide central banks with a streamlined route for cross-border payments without marginalising fiat currencies.

In this presentation, Gilles Chemla, professor of finance at Imperial College Business School and co-director of Imperial's Centre for Financial Technology, outlined the transformational impact tokenisation could have for payments and why stablecoins hold strong potential for operational sovereignty.

"Blockchain technology, distributed ledger technology is on the verge of transforming finance, securing transactions, providing on-chain settlement," Chemla said. "It is really expected to transform the world."

Tokenisation will transform areas such as real estate and private equities, Chemla argued, but he focused on the major impact it can have on payments, which he acknowledged as "essential to the modern economy". Payments are also the most valuable subsector in finance, with McKinsey tracking its average return on equity at 18.9 per cent.

But for 50 years, Chemla said, payments have failed to evolve. In developed countries, payments are primarily made with credit or debit cards, or virtual wallets such as Google Pay and Apple Pay linked to real cards. He argued that tokenisation offers a route for evolution here by introducing more competition to the sector and circumventing cross-border payment fees.

The three main routes forward are stablecoins, tokenised deposits, and central bank digital currency (CBDC), and Chemla called for a "diversified ecosystem" between all three.

Tokenised deposits, he explained, can be helpful for banks as they make corporate settlements and involve themselves in treasury operations. But he explained they also "reinforce bank market power, which is a problem". CBDCs are the "top of the money hierarchy" due to their security, being guaranteed by a central bank, but are limited in scope, he added.

Stablecoins, meanwhile, are already worth $300 billion and expected to be worth trillions by 2030.

Chemla explained stablecoins offer 24/7 on-chain transfer and settlement and can be adopted by any individual, noting that 80 to 90 per cent of US stablecoin holders live outside of the US. But this flexibility is also the reason that Chemla called on regulators and financial services organisations to move now or cede more of the market to the US in a process he called "digital dollarisation".

For example, the UK currently holds 37.8 per cent of the foreign exchange market and these customers are likely to value stablecoins for their flexibility. Without a UK option, they could switch to US-linked alternatives. A new system must be diversified across currencies and reliant on international collaboration, Chemla stressed. "It is very important to have blocs, big blocs with the right mindsets, the right regulatory environments, the right financial infrastructure," he said.

"The future of payments will likely be with more bank-to-bank transactions with open banking and more token-based payments," Chemla said. "In the UK, we need to make sure that we make good space for fintech payment firms and challenger banks."

Shaping the bank of the future: From purpose to performance (Sponsored by Rackspace Technology)

With challenger banks on the rise and a more mobile customer base than ever before, the future of banking seems uncertain. On the one hand, technology is driving new innovations and allowing banking to be more personalised than ever. On the other, legacy organisational models and demographic-specific approaches may have to be revisited in the long term.

This panel session explored what will define a 'successful bank' over the next decade, as organisations look to build customer relationships and trust, organisational agility, and the ability to execute their strategy consistently over time.

Simon Bennett, chief technical officer, EMEA at Rackspace, said that the bank of the future is one that uses its data most effectively and eliminates its technical debt in service of the customer.

"If you think about most financial institutions in the retail sector, people have had a bank account for years and there's a treasure trove of data that is often under-exploited, misunderstood, not properly looked at," he said.

As banks become more digital, they can also become more specialised. Conrad Ford, chief technical officer at Allica, argued that the end of branch banking will be more impactful than waves such as AI as customers no longer choose their bank based solely on proximity.

"You're going to see much more breakup of the value chain, most famously with embedded finance," he said.

Saira Khan, head of innovation and partnerships at First Direct, agreed that customers are becoming "impatient" for innovation and will look elsewhere if they don't find it at their current bank.

"Are we all loyal to our banks now? I don't think that is the case."

The panellists agreed on the potential for the proper use of APIs and AI agents to change how customers interact with banks. But Eleanor Whittaker, digital project manager at NatWest, noted that banks must strike the balance of moving fast on AI to remain competitive but not so fast they leave their customers behind.

The panellists were united in their view that banks should work to help build financial literacy. Khan noted that as an increasing number of young people learn financial skills from social media, which comes with its own risks, banks must move to fill this gap.

They also noted that challenger banks will face a crossroads in the coming years as their customer bases shift. Whittaker gave the example of Monzo, which has lots of younger customers. "When those younger customers get older, does Monzo move with them or does Monzo stay in its age range and the people churn a lot more?"

Bennett said that whatever happens, challenger banks have to avoid becoming incumbents and work hard to remain innovative. On the other hand, Ford noted that incumbents "know how to make money banking" and that challengers still have lessons to learn from them.

Khan noted that speed must be matched with responsibility. Ultimately, she said, it's often better to be slower to move on high-risk moves rather than erode customer trust. Whittaker agreed, noting that challengers will lose some of their specialised, innovative appeal with customers if they try to fill the space of incumbents.

"If you try to build up your interfaces with customers, you're going to need to provide a lot more features," she said.

Vicky Soden (WIBF)

Engineering equity: Diversity as a driver of technical innovation and operational performance

Rapid advances in technology are meaning financial institutions face growing pressure to attract, develop and grow technical talent. At the same time, there is a growing body of evidence that diverse teams produce better outcomes, identify risks more effectively, and deliver stronger innovation.

In this session Vicky Soden, chief executive of Women in Banking and Finance (WIBF), shared that the organisation was expanding from networking and mentorship to helping train women for in-demand skills.

"Diversity is changing, it's a tough market out there," she said. "We know we need to evolve, and that evolution needs to be about helping corporates to support their employees to grow in a way that keeps up with the pace of change."

Soden said the WIBF is hoping to develop an AI-powered career management tool to help women determine the "next best steps" for achieving high level positions from their current roles.

On the topic of ensuring diversity is something companies build into their routines rather than treating it as an HR silo, Soden said there is a lack of understanding about why firms need to focus on diversity.

"For a lot of organisations, diversity is just about ticking the box," she said. "Actually, diversity is a real business imperative."

If everyone who is designing products, processes and testing are from the same background and think the same, Soden added, "you will only get one outcome". By recognising that customers and employees are diverse and involving these voices in decision making, financial institutions will be better able to achieve stronger business outcomes.

Soden warned that at best a lack of diversity manifests in blind spots, but at its worst, malicious actors within an organisation build their own prejudices into systems.

Data shows that women and people of colour are being let go at a significantly higher rate than white men, which Soden described as "walking ourselves into a business crisis. […] If you don't have that diversity of thought up front, what we get out

of the back end is not going to be something that meets the customer's needs."

Citing a study by Dr. Grace Lauden at LSE, Soden noted that evidence suggests in order for women to feel empowered to speak out to challenge groupthink, they must make up at least half of whatever group they are in.

Soden closed with the example of McLaren, which changed its corporate culture.

"Every single person in the organisation, from the chief executive literally down to the cleaner, has one objective, which is to make the car go one second faster around the track," she said.

"What that does is set up a culture of psychological safety, because it means that everybody's empowered to have an opinion and challenge groupthink; if they've challenged something that ultimately makes the car go one second faster, they can meet their objective."

Keynote - Caroline Haines

Untapped Digital Talent: The £3 billion opportunity

Addressing the UK's digital skills shortage will require organisations to rethink how they define talent, according to Caroline Haines, elected member of the City of London Corporation and chair of the Women Pivoting to Digital Taskforce.

Drawing on the findings of the taskforce's report, Untapped Digital Talent: The £3 Billion Opportunity, Haines argued that financial services, professional services, and technology firms are overlooking a significant pool of experienced workers at a time when demand for digital skills continues to grow.

The report found that approximately 12,100 digital roles went unfilled across the three sectors last year, contributing to hundreds of millions of pounds in lost profits and limiting how well organisations respond to new business opportunities.

Haines said the challenge is being intensified by two major shifts in the labour market: the rapid pace at which skills become outdated and the growing impact of AI and automation on administrative and operational roles.

"The question is no longer who already has the perfect technical skill set," she said. "It has become who has the capacity to learn, to reskill and to adapt quickly."

The taskforce believes mid-career women represent one of the UK's largest untapped sources of digital talent. Many traditionally female jobs are expected to be increasingly affected by automation over the next decade. But Haines argued that those most affected possess valuable organisational knowledge and transferable skills that could help address the digital skills gap.

Rather than relying solely on external recruitment, organisations should focus on identifying internal talent and creating structured pathways into digital careers, she added.

According to the report, reskilling existing employees instead of making them redundant and hiring externally could save employers tens of thousands of pounds per employee while preserving valuable business knowledge.

"If we continue to hire in the same way, we will continue getting the same results," Haines said.

She outlined three priorities for employers: adopting skills-based recruitment that values learning potential over technical experience; making reskilling a core business capability rather than an occasional training exercise; and creating clearer career pathways through mentoring, secondments, and partnerships with education providers.

Haines also stressed that reskilling programmes need to be continuous rather than built around long-term training plans, reflecting the speed at which technology is changing.

Beyond recruitment and training, she identified workplace culture as one of the biggest barriers to progress. Organisations, she said, must become more flexible in how they develop careers and recognise talent if they are to unlock the full benefits of AI and workforce transformation.

"The future of FinTech will be shaped both by the technology and by the people who design it, build it and apply it," Haines said. "Right now we have a transformational opportunity to redesign both the workplace and the workforce."

"There is a growing gap between the technology we are building and the people we need to deliver it," Haines concluded. "Within that challenge is a practical, actionable opportunity to rethink how we define talent [...] and to invest in people differently."

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