



MX

6 Financial Services Predictions for 2026



Data-Informed Technology as a Catalyst for Deepening Financial Relationships

In 2025, we predicted that data would remain the central piece of every financial provider's strategy. Throughout the year, data stayed front and center, helping financial providers reach their most sought-after outcomes: increased deposits and deeper customer engagement.

We saw great strides across the industry — with a shift “beyond broad segmentation to individualization,” as [McKinsey & Company noted](#). And, we saw setbacks — such as industry debate and new developments related to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's [Section 1033 rule to establish personal financial data rights](#). The industry's focus on data remains constant.

It's no surprise that data continues to be part of every conversation for forward-thinking industry leaders.

And, it's not one-sided. Consumers recognize the value of sharing their data to positively impact their financial lives. In fact, 53% of consumers reported they would give their financial provider access to more of their data if they knew it would result in a better experience. Unfortunately, 38% of consumers agree financial providers are not using their data to deliver better experiences — [according to MX](#).

How do we close this experience gap? It's time to marry data and relationships once and for all.

1. AI Adoption Will Shift Toward Use Cases that Actually Benefit Consumers

Today, artificial intelligence (AI) is everywhere in financial services — at least in promise. It leads every discussion about modernizing the industry, every industry conference agenda, and every strategic investment conversation. In fact, nearly [8 in 10 banking organizations](#) report AI use in some capacity. Yet, in practice, most customers still see only small, incremental benefits.

AI without a customer-centric focus or problem-solving purpose will always fall short of expectations. Isabelle Zdatny, head of thought leadership at [Qualtrics XM Institute](#) said, “Too many companies are deploying AI to cut costs, not solve problems, and customers can tell the difference.”





Instead of fully transforming financial lives, AI has largely delivered modest conveniences: quicker service responses, basic alerts, surface-level personalization, and chatbots that help around the edges but don't meaningfully improve financial clarity or confidence. The result is a widening gap between what AI is supposed to unlock — better decisions, reduced stress, improved financial health, etc. — and what consumers actually experience.

That needs to change. As described in a recent [Financial Brand article](#), “The most impactful AI won't appear as chatbot overlays... Instead, it will be invisible, woven into the experience itself through contextual summaries, conversational interfaces, and autonomous agents working on customers' behalf.”

In 2026, financial institutions and fintechs will shift from a vague catch-all buzzword approach to AI to meaningfully embedding it to support the everyday financial lives of consumers.

Honing in on the customer experience — delivering personalized, AI-powered financial guidance and money-management support — will be the AI use cases that make the biggest impact.

This shift is being driven by the intersection of consumer demand and superior data. Trust expectations are rising. Customers now want institutions to guide their financial lives, not just provide services. [The Financial Brand](#) notes that banks are entering “a new standard for experience and trust,”

where AI must “improve financial wellness, not just efficiency.”

This evolving expectation is reshaping investment priorities across the sector. Deloitte reports that [customer experience and engagement have become the top driver of AI investment](#), surpassing operational efficiency for the first time.

This marks a decisive pivot: AI is no longer just a tool for internal optimization, but a pathway to deliver meaningful customer outcomes.

And, consumers are ready to adopt AI to help them with their finances. According to [research from Intuit Credit Karma](#), 66% of Americans who have used AI before say they used it to seek financial advice. But, the advice they are getting is shaky at best. Fifty-two percent of those who have acted on financial advice they received from genAI say they have made a poor financial decision or mistakes based on the information they received.

Consumers are clamoring for financial tools powered by AI that can give them specific, personalized, and sound financial advice. By the end of 2026, AI will become a set of precise, measurable tools that help people spend smarter, save consistently, borrow confidently, and navigate uncertainty with greater resilience. Financial institutions will gain advantage not by scaling AI everywhere, but by applying it where it can actually positively impact consumers' lives.

2. The Mobile Banking Experience-Obsessed Will Reign Supreme

As early as 1999, mobile banking entered the scene. SMS text messaging for simple balance checks allowed consumers to get a greater look into their finances while on the go. Today, banks everywhere have adopted mobile banking on some level. Mobile apps allow consumers access to functionality such as account transfers, customer support, transaction information, and (sometimes) more within a single application.

As a result, [MX research](#) found that more than half of consumers use their mobile banking app every single day — some, multiple times per day. As mobile banking only becomes more prolific, financial institutions that fall behind on consumer expectations for superior mobile banking experiences should be worried.

Fifty-eight percent of consumers say they would switch providers if the mobile experience was bad, [according to MX research](#). And, 67% of U.S. adults agree they would not choose a financial provider that had a bad mobile experience.

Why aren't financial services providers living up to their full potential with their mobile apps? At [Money20/20 USA](#), James Dotter, Chief Business Officer at MX, suggested that mobile is still seen primarily as a basic channel: "Mobile banking often becomes just more of a service channel and lacks the opportunity to really engage the customer in the way that they're expecting."

In 2026, banks that are not obsessed with their mobile strategy will fall behind. A basic mobile app won't just inconvenience customers, it will cause even banks with deep customer relationships to become obsolete.

Personalization is the name of the game in a high-quality mobile banking experience. Fifty-one percent of U.S. adults expect greater levels of personalization from



the finance-related mobile apps they use today. It's not just an idea. It's an expectation.

Case in point: [Central Pacific Bank \(CPB\)](#) shared how rolling out a new and improved mobile app changed the customer experience with [The Financial Brand](#). Jason Lazzerini, an Executive Vice President and the Chief Digital Officer at CPB said, "We embedded our direct deposit switch into the mobile app, and the results have been unbelievable... the day we put it on a mobile device, we had 60 conversions in the first week."

CPB didn't introduce new functionality — it simply made it accessible to more consumers within its mobile app. This simple change boosted consumer engagement and led them to switch their deposits, deepening relationships with customers and driving more deposits.

Mobile's impact on consumer engagement means that financial institutions should bake it into their customer strategies. [A report from McKinsey & Company](#) said, "Mobile is now the gateway to everyday banking for a growing majority of consumers in various markets. Banks therefore need to design their distribution so it leads with mobile."

This isn't a mere suggestion to include mobile in distribution plans — but to lead with mobile. The financial institutions that lead with mobile will outpace their competitors and find deeper engagement with their customers in 2026.

3. Canada Will Sweep Past the United States as Open Banking Momentum Accelerates

Open Banking has transformed the financial landscape — much to the benefit of consumers — by ensuring greater access and choice when it comes to financial products and services. By enabling consumers to manage and control their financial data, financial services has become more inclusive, more competitive, and more accessible. Open Banking — and more broadly, Open Finance — is here to stay. However, the practical application and implementation across the world has been anything but consistent, particularly when it comes to standards, governance, and regulatory frameworks.

In the past few months, Canada has moved ahead on implementing its open banking framework. Through the [Consumer-Driven Banking Act \(CDBA\)](#) and commitments reaffirmed in [Budget 2025](#), the Canadian federal government has established both the legal foundation and a phased roadmap for Open Banking, including enabling secure “read access” in 2026, followed by a move toward “write access” in 2027. Framework oversight is also shifting to the Bank of Canada, signaling an emphasis on operational stability, risk management, and long-term infrastructure.

In the United States, regulatory frameworks remain less settled. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s (CFPB) Section 1033 rule — designed to standardize data access, govern portability, and reduce reliance on screen scraping — was finalized in late 2024 with the goal of creating a unified national framework. Since then, the rule has been [reopened](#), challenged in court, and temporarily blocked. Now, a new version of the rule is on the horizon, leaving the industry without clarity on implementation timelines, liability, or standards.



Adding to the complexity, the Department of Justice’s recent [determination that the CFPB’s funding structure is unlawful](#) raises questions about the Bureau’s operational future. Without congressional action, the agency could face limitations on its ability to enforce consumer protection laws or advance a revised open banking rule. These challenges come at a time when consumer expectations for personalization, transparency, and financial guidance are accelerating.

In 2026, Canada’s regulatory clarity will move open banking standards ahead as the United States still works to find its regulatory footing. The U.S.’s push forward will be made more gradual, but not for lack of capability or innovation. 2026 may prove to be a turning point.

Open Banking could become a midterm campaign buzzword, pulling conversations around data rights, consumer choice, and financial transparency into the national spotlight. As U.S. political candidates debate who should control financial data and how consumers can benefit from greater portability and competition, public awareness will rise and accelerate demand for modern, permissioned experiences regardless of regulatory timing.

If Washington resolves the legal and structural questions surrounding 1033, the United States can quickly regain speed by leveraging its deep ecosystem of banks, fintechs, and regulatory partners. Meanwhile,



we expect to see Canada's regulatory certainty accelerate ecosystem collaboration in 2026, giving banks, credit unions, and fintechs the confidence to invest in open banking infrastructure and deliver tangible benefits to consumers.

Regardless of each country's legislative path, the demand for Open Banking is unmistakable: [consumers are asking for more control over their financial data](#), and institutions want to modernize, reduce friction, and replace legacy data access methods with secure, API-based connectivity. Market momentum hasn't slowed — it's simply waiting for regulatory alignment. The winners will be the financial institutions that use this moment to modernize their data infrastructure, invest in secure APIs, and be ready to scale the moment regulatory alignment arrives.

4. Banks Will Realize the Great Wealth Transfer as a Trickle, Not a Flood

For years, the “great wealth transfer” has been framed as a seismic financial event, a once-in-a-generation shift that will move unprecedented sums from older

Americans to their heirs. Headlines often cite the same eye-catching number: an estimated [\\$124 trillion](#) expected to change hands by 2048. The dominant narrative says a tidal wave of assets is coming, and the financial industry must brace for dramatic disruption.

Those projections tell us about scale, but tell us little about timing. The reality is that longer lifespans, rising healthcare costs, estate planning choices, and shifting spending habits may eat into, or delay, that wealth transfer. At the same time, most wealth will shift within the older generations first, as spouses inherit before children or other heirs. Finally, it's unlikely that we'll see a mass event where older generations pass away and pass on their assets in a single year.

In 2026, we predict financial services leaders will realize the great wealth transfer will unfold with less urgency and spectacle than projected. Instead of a flood of assets changing hands, it will be a constant trickle for many years to come.

This wealth transfer will simply become business as usual for financial providers as assets change hands in more incremental ways — throughout a consumer's life.

Rather than waiting for estates to settle, older generations are increasingly providing their descendants with earlier support. While many parents are sharing their wealth in ways like education funding, childcare, and financial coaching; home-buying assistance is becoming a persistent need. In fact, a recent study found that [38% of Gen Z homebuyers](#) are receiving help from their parents to make their first home purchase.

Additionally, the total numbers gloss over the fact that more than [50% of the total transfer volume](#) is expected to come from high-net-worth or ultra-high-net-worth households, which make up only about 2% of all households. This means that, while the numbers are significant, the impact will be localized to relatively few families with extremely stable financial relationships.



All of this reinforces a central truth. The \$124 trillion figure may be eye-catching, but the reality will look far more like a slow, steady evolution than a sudden shock. That's why we compare this to 1999's countdown to Y2K event — when everyone feared a major computer bug would break everything at the turn of the millennium, as systems might confuse “00” as 1900 instead of 2000. The reality is the great wealth transfer will unfold similarly — high attention and big expectations that ends in little to no drama.

As 2026 approaches, the industry should prepare for something quieter, more distributed, and more complex than the current narrative suggests. However it takes shape, the great wealth transfer will favor financial providers that look beyond the hype and focus on the actual needs of consumers.

Older generations will need clear guidance that connects managing money in retirement with estate planning and recommendations about when and how to pass on wealth. And, younger generations will look for financial providers that can support them when new wealth and new responsibilities transfer to them.

The financial institutions that meet those needs and assist consumers now will be far more prepared than those waiting for a mythical inheritance tsunami.

5. Consumer-Authorized Scams Will Become Leading Type of Fraud Attacks

For years, financial institutions have built fraud strategies around protecting data through stricter authentication, better credential safeguards, and stronger account-takeover defenses. But, with the rise of AI, increasingly sophisticated social engineering, and PhaaS (phishing-as-a-service), the best authentication protocols are no longer enough. Fraudsters are increasingly persuading consumers to willingly hand

over information or initiate fraudulent transactions through clever uses of brand impersonation, AI-generated phishing scams, and more.

This shift is already evident in emerging data. The FTC reported [a sharp jump in consumer fraud losses, topping \\$12 billion in 2024](#), with imposter scams and investment schemes driving much of that increase. The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center [recorded over \\$16 billion in losses the same year](#), again largely attributed to scams rooted in social engineering rather than credential theft. And, authorized push payment (APP) fraud follows this same trajectory, with Deloitte projecting [U.S. losses approaching \\$15 billion by 2028](#)

At the same time, traditional fraud entry points have grown more secure. Tokenized credentials, multifactor authentication, and real-time behavioral checks make it harder for fraudsters to monetize stolen data directly, pushing attackers toward the weakest link left: human decision-making. [As Verizon reported, over 60% of data breaches last year involved a human element](#).

Today, a consumer's [digital identity has become increasingly fragmented](#). Consumers juggle dozens of apps, security prompts, and verification methods. In the financial industry alone, [MX research shows the average consumer has 5 to 7 financial accounts](#). This complexity creates inconsistencies and room for uncertainty about what legitimate authentication from each provider should look like. When verification experiences feel inconsistent or confusing, it becomes easier for bad actors to persuade consumers to authorize transactions they shouldn't.

In 2026, the defining fraud challenge won't be keeping criminals out. It will be stopping them from convincing consumers to let them in. Looking ahead, the real fraud battleground won't be databases or devices — it will be consumers themselves.

This is especially true as AI-driven social engineering is amplifying these schemes. Deepfake audio, convincing synthetic identities, and hyper-personalized phishing make scams feel more legitimate and erode consumers' confidence in determining what's real and what's not. McAfee Labs reports that [70% of people aren't confident they could tell the difference between a cloned voice and the real thing](#). Bad actors no longer need to steal your data when they can simply ask for it in a voice that sounds like your bank, your relative, or your boss.

Banks, credit unions, and fintechs will need to rethink fraud strategies around these behaviors — not just verification processes — by emphasizing consumer education, incorporating smarter warnings, and introducing additional safety checks where necessary.

Financial institutions that adapt quickly will protect not only consumers' money but also their trust, [which remains the most valuable currency in an era where deception feels more real than ever](#).

6. Consumers Will No Longer Be Content with Customization Instead of True Personalization

Amazon, Netflix, and Spotify all operate by one common theme: there's power in personalized recommendations. But, these recommendations aren't based on simple demographics. These businesses

know that their customers' needs and wants go deeper than birth year, generational characteristics, gender, etc. They build these recommendations based on what consumers actually do.

What's more, consumers want these same hyper-personalized experiences from other companies they regularly use. For instance, [MX found](#) that 61% of consumers expect their financial provider to know them.

Suncoast Credit Union's Chief Growth Officer Jana Manley had this to say about the use of [consumer-permissioned data to personalize experiences](#): "They [consumers] expect it. And I think a lot of them are exceptionally disappointed that their financial institutions don't look to that level to help them."

Financial institutions are already sitting on mountains of consumer-permissioned data that tell them everything they need to know about their consumers. As [MX's Vice President of Client Success Heather Warner](#) put it, "My bank knows more about me than my doctor does. It knows how much money I make, how financially savvy I am, and how many times I eat out."





Data is a valuable currency. And, consumers are willing to share it to gain more personalized experiences and better outcomes — [MX found](#) 53% of consumers would give their provider more data if it would result in a better experience. Yet, many financial providers still only offer basic customization, not true personalization. It's time for that to change.

In 2026, data-driven personalization will become the industry standard. Data-driven personalization must surpass customization using names, geographies, or generations.

We think financial providers will start to see Know Your Customer (KYC) as more than a moniker for security protocols — leading to a deeper understanding of their customers and deliver true personalization.

Knowing your customer means more than knowing their name. It means being able to recognize changes in behaviors — and then do something about it to support their changing financial needs in these various life moments. For example, this could mean [recognizing those frequent Home Depot purchases as signs of a new home purchase](#) — and considering if a home equity loan is a good next step.

As Alex Johnson, founder of Fintech Takes [wrote in an article](#), “You need to know when something meaningful has happened. Tracking clicks and logins isn’t enough. You need to be able to recognize life events (first payroll, move, marriage, new dependent, retirement date) and money events (direct deposit posted, bill due, balance cliff, new payee, category spike). These moments are where trust is built or lost with consumers.”

Finding opportunities of relevance through personalized banking will have a great impact on how consumers interact with you — or determine if they will even turn to your organization for support. Forty-five percent of industry leaders have lost customers due to poor personalization — according to a [Forrester Consulting report commissioned by MX](#).

Financial institutions and fintechs that capitalize on data-driven personalization will transform the customer experience, accelerate growth within their business, and drive long-lasting customer relationships.