

Truist's digital chief points to importance of tech in helping clients

Article

Digital initiatives have transformed banking. Their primary driver, the bank's head of digital, is a key figure in their bank's success. Accordingly, their status and job duties have grown and stand as high as ever. For example, just in the past week:

- **Bank of America** has [opted to give](#) **David Tyrie**, its head of digital, purview over its marketing operations once Chief Marketing Officer **Meredith Verdone** retires later this year.

- **JPMorgan Chase** has promoted **Allison Beer**, from digital head and chief product officer to chief executive officer for Cards.

In our series of Q&As with banking heads of digital, we also spoke with **Dontá Wilson, Truist's chief digital and client experience officer**. Like his peers Tyrie and Beer, Wilson also believes the term “digital transformation” is a misnomer—instead, he views it as a matter of “client experience” and how banks can serve their clients.

The following has been edited for brevity and clarity.

II: If you were to write a job description for yourself as chief digital officer, what would you say were the leading requirements?

DW: The first is having empathy for the client. That drives everything else you do. We're building these solutions—be it nondigital or digital—to solve a client's problem, meet a need, or give them opportunities.

By client, I mean internal clients—our teammates—as well as external clients. Most of the time, when people are talking digital, they're talking about external clients. But the chief digital client experience officer brings as much value to teammates as to the clients.

You also need to have a high aptitude for tech and strong analytical skills—those are table stakes.

All of that adds up to your chief digital client experience officer needing to be a caring problem solver.

II: A buzzword we often hear is “digital transformation.” Could you define what that means for Truist?

DW: In one sentence: It fosters a seamless experience between clients' financial lives and personal lives, using data analytics to enable distinctive experiences to support their unique journeys. That's what we're trying to do.

Personally, though, I don't think we're going through a digital transformation. We're going through a client acceleration and a client transformation. Clients have accelerated the use of some capabilities that have already been there—and now, they want them to be better [...]

II: What skills and experience have been most important to your success as chief digital officer?

DW: To the skills I mentioned earlier—empathy, caring, tech savvy, and strong analytics—I would add being collaborative. In our role, we have to cross channels and lines of business and work with business partners. So you have to be a great collaborator.

You have to be forward-thinking and creative and be able to reimagine things—because banking has been broken for so long, you need to create a new experience. And if you don’t have that skill of knowing where the puck is going—and even beyond that—then it would be limiting for this role.

The last skill would be execution. Vision without execution is hallucination. You can have a great forward-thinking insight and you can be super collaborative, creative, and brilliantly tech savvy—but if you can’t project manage and work through teams collectively to deliver, then you won’t be successful.

Read the full Q&A with Dontá Wilson [here](#). For a deeper dive into thoughts from the heads of digital at a dozen of the largest financial institutions in the US, UK, and Canada, and the heads of product at three top neobanks, read [“The Banking Heads of Digital Report: 15 Leaders on Priorities, Challenges, and Opportunities.”](#)

Expectations of Banking Customers Worldwide vs. Priorities of Banking Executives Worldwide, Dec 2020

% of respondents and percentage point difference

	Customer expectations	Bank priorities	Percentage point difference
Omnichannel experience	76%	58%	18
Focus on transparency, ethics, and social responsibility	65%	25%	40
On-demand, anywhere, anytime customer service	59%	66%	7
Reduce cost/charges of products and services	48%	24%	24
Provide value-added financial services	47%	41%	6
Improve customer support services	31%	12%	19

Note: banking customers n=8,559; banking executives n=122
Source: Capgemini, “World Retail Banking Report 2021” in collaboration with Efma, March 25, 2021
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