Banking
sector overview

Moving beyond bots to agentic AI

The banking sector has long been at the forefront of digital transformation, but the pace of change accelerated dramatically with the rise of artificial intelligence. What began with the introduction of chatbots is now evolving into a new era: agentic AI, autonomous agents capable of performing increasingly complex tasks.

From chatbots to financial decisioning

Banks are moving beyond static chatbots and deploying AI assistants that support customers with complex financial decisions. These systems combine conversational interfaces with sophisticated analytics to simulate outcomes, optimize portfolios, and guide customers through choices on debt, savings, and investment.

Personalized journeys at scale

AI is also enabling banks to deliver highly individualized customer journeys. BBVA, a large bank in Spain, introduced a persona engine which adapts product recommendations dynamically, based on customer behavior and interaction history.[1] This marks a step change from generic product offerings toward journeys that are continually refined, contextual, and tailored to each individual's needs.

Ambient finance: AI in the background

A further evolution is the rise of ambient AI, tools that operate unobtrusively in the background to nudge customers toward better outcomes. Singapore's OCBC has launched "ambient finance" capabilities across wearables and smart devices, providing contextual savings prompts, spending alerts, and reminders.[2] These nudges are driven by insights — 250 million insights are sent yearly to help customers save time and effort and improve their financial management.

The workforce challenges

Despite these advances, full adoption across the sector remains uneven. Most banks today demonstrate pockets of excellence, but consistent use of agentic AI across divisions and geographies is still two to three years away.

The main constraint is not technology but people. Banks must redefine workforce strategies to integrate human expertise with AI agents, redesign role profiles, and establish governance frameworks for orchestrating autonomous systems at scale.

The rise of the "Citizen Developer"

A critical enabler of the next stage of agentic AI will be the rise of the citizen developer, employees who, armed with intuitive AI-driven tools, can design and deploy applications without specialist coding knowledge. Platforms such as Figma and other low-code or no-code environments are embedding AI capabilities directly into their interfaces, allowing non-technical teams to rapidly prototype, iterate, and launch solutions. For banks, this means business users can co-create AI-powered workflows, customer interfaces, or compliance checks alongside IT teams, dramatically reducing development cycles and unlocking innovation at scale.

The balance to win

The banking industry is clearly leading in AI adoption compared to other sectors. Yet the next phase will likely require more than pilots and proofs of concept. Success will depend on orchestrating AI across the enterprise, rethinking workforce roles, and ensuring customer trust in AI-driven financial services. For banks that can achieve this balance, the prize is significant: more engaged customers, stronger performance, and the ability to deliver personalized, intelligent banking at scale.

> " The banking industry is at the forefront of AI adoption, moving beyond chatbots to agentic AI that supports complex financial decisions and delivers highly individualized customer journeys. The next phase of this evolution, however, hinges on integrating human expertise with AI, fostering the rise of the 'citizen developer,' and orchestrating AI across the enterprise to build customer trust and deliver personalized, intelligent banking at scale. "

Martin Herbert
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1   BBVA. "The Artificial Intelligence Behind BBVA's Virtual Assistant Blue." BBVA, 3 Apr. 2023.
2   Cloudera. "OCBC Bank." Cloudera Customer Stories.

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