



# Digital Client Engagement: **The Future of Financial Services in 2024 and Beyond**

# Contents



<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
Digital Client Engagement in the Financial Sector	<b>4</b>
Digital Transformation in a post-COVID World	<b>5</b>
<hr/>	
<b>The Current State of Digital Client Engagement</b>	<b>6</b>
Hyper-personalisation at the Forefront	<b>7</b>
Augmenting Customer Service with AI and Machine Learning	<b>7</b>
Enhancing Engagement with Basic Tools	<b>8</b>
Digital Hospitality: A New Paradigm	<b>8</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Digital Hospitality</b>	<b>9</b>
Environment Matters	<b>10</b>
Why is Digital Hospitality Important?	<b>11</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Strategies for Enhancing Digital Client Engagement</b>	<b>12</b>
Deliver Seamless Brand Experiences	<b>13</b>
Personalisation and Innovative Content Strategies	<b>14</b>
Reducing Friction in Client Interactions	<b>15</b>
<hr/>	
<b>The Indispensable Role of Digital Engagement</b>	<b>17</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>19</b>
<hr/>	
<b>About Reef</b>	<b>20</b>

# Executive Summary

In an era marked by rapid technological evolution and shifting client expectations, the financial services sector stands at a pivotal juncture. This eBook delves into the transformative impact of digitalisation on financial institutions, highlighting the critical importance of digital client engagement as a cornerstone for success. It underscores the necessity of integrating sophisticated digital strategies to not only meet but exceed the evolving demands of today's highly discerning clients.

At the heart of this digital shift is the emphasis on creating seamless, personalised experiences across all client touchpoints. The eBook introduces [Reef](#), Totem's innovative digital arm, designed to centralise and elevate financial firms' offerings. Reef ensures brand consistency, increases efficiency, enables scalability, provides robust security, unlocks valuable first-party data, and delivers tailored content experiences, setting a new standard for digital client engagement in the financial sector.

**The rise of hybrid working**

**The importance of sustainability and ESG**

**The personalisation of financial services**

**Increased digitalisation through AI and automation**

These trends point towards an accessible, sustainable, and personalised financial future, requiring strategic engagement.

“

Digital client engagement is crucial for financial institutions' success in the digital era. Adopting digital transformation and platforms like Reef is vital for a client- focused future.”



**Matt Ryan**  
Chief Transformation Officer  
at Reef



# Introduction

# Digital Client Engagement in the Financial Sector

In the realm of modern finance, simply having an online presence is no longer enough to attract and retain clients. The secret of success for current-day financial firms, therefore, lies in maintaining a consistent level of service across all channels. As such, digital client engagement (also known as digital customer engagement) has emerged as a transformative concept that is rapidly reshaping how financial institutions interact with their clientele.

There are several key components of digital client engagement and Digital Hospitality, such as enhanced personalisation and self-service capabilities. However, before discussing these, it's perhaps a good idea to familiarise ourselves with digital transformation and what this has meant for the financial sector.

“

Digital client engagement, in its simplest terms, is the ‘experience’ given to clients across all digital channels. More often than not, the first interaction a client has with a brand will be through a digital channel. Whether an online article, video, webinar or even a virtual AGM, every interaction is an opportunity to position the brand and create a consistent and valuable impression. This is something at Reef we call ‘Digital Hospitality.’”

**Matt Ryan**

Chief Transformation Officer at Reef

## Introduction

# Digital Transformation in a post-COVID World

COVID-related regulations, and the rise of remote working, resulted in an acceleration of digital transformation and the greater uptake of digital-focused services.

Digital transformation has been an inevitability for quite some time, with even research pre-pandemic (2019) showing that in Britain, just 23% of all payments were made by cash. Meanwhile, as highlighted by Deloitte, after the 2008 financial crisis, a massive wave of digitalisation and automation was triggered by new competitors (fintechs) entering the market.

Digital transformation within the financial sector has not been limited solely to fintech, however, and whilst wealth management firms and corporate-focused banks have somewhat flown under the radar compared to more consumer-focused campaigns, it's important to note that they, too, have been implementing greater digital offerings throughout their business. As presented by international law firm, Mayer Brown, financial service providers are increasingly reliant on Digital Engagement Practices (DEP) — and in particular, technological tools such as predictive analysis, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML). These DEPs allow financial institutions to provide an increasing number of services to their customers and are a core part of the overarching digital client engagement strategy.



“

COVID-19 has forever changed how financial firms engage with clients.”

**Charles Smith**

Former Head of Digital Solutions  
at the London Stock Exchange



# The Current State of Digital Client Engagement

The financial sector is witnessing a paradigm shift in how client engagement is conceptualised and executed, driven largely by the advent of Digital Engagement Practices (DEPs).

In this era of digital transformation, DEPs are not merely additive but foundational to creating enriched, personalised client experiences.



# 01.

## Hyper-personalisation at the Forefront

Hyper-personalisation stands out as a leading trend, signifying the shift from generic to highly individualised client interactions.

Financial institutions are leveraging vast datasets with sophisticated analytics to tailor services and communications to the unique needs of each client. This approach not only enhances the client experience but also fosters a deeper sense of loyalty and satisfaction.

Personalised investment advice, customised financial alerts, and tailored banking solutions are just a few examples of how hyper-personalisation is being applied in the financial sector.

# 02.

## Augmenting Customer Service with AI and Machine Learning

The integration of AI and ML into customer service operations marks a significant evolution in client engagement strategies. Smart assistants and advanced chatbots, akin to Chat-GPT-like technologies, are now pivotal in offering immediate, 24/7 support to clients.

These AI-powered tools can handle a wide array of basic account queries with increasing accuracy and efficiency. Their ability to learn from interactions enables a continuous improvement in service quality, making digital client engagement more dynamic and responsive.



# 03.

## Enhancing Engagement with Basic Tools

Traditional digital engagement tools such as webinars and podcasts continue to play a crucial role in the financial sector's client engagement strategy. These platforms offer valuable opportunities for financial institutions to share insights, market updates, and educational content. However, the effectiveness of these tools is being significantly augmented through Digital Hospitality services, which aim to enrich the client experience by adding layers of interaction and personalisation.

# 04.

## Digital Hospitality: A New Paradigm

Digital Hospitality represents a transformative approach in the financial sector's quest to refine digital client engagement. This innovative concept aims to replicate the warmth, attentiveness, and personalised care traditionally associated with face-to-face interactions within the digital sphere. By embracing Digital Hospitality, firms are not just enhancing the utility of webinars, podcasts, and similar tools; they are redefining the meaning of client engagement in a digital-first world.

The principle behind Digital Hospitality is simple: to offer each client a bespoke digital experience that is of the same high standard as offline experiences. Digital Hospitality, therefore, involves more than just the customisation and rebranding of digital services; it extends to creating an environment and experience where clients feel genuinely valued in the same manner as they would do in a high-end physical office. Tools like Reef play a pivotal role in this process, offering the means to infuse digital interactions with a level of personalisation and attentiveness that mirrors the best of in-person hospitality.



# Digital Hospitality

Financial firms invest in their physical brand with stunning, architecturally designed offices and boardrooms, and lavish corporate hospitality. However, when it comes to digital engagement the experience often falls well short of the same high standards.

Take an investor meeting or AGM, for example. They often default to generic virtual platforms that pale in comparison to the prestige they've carefully cultivated offline.



## Environments Matter

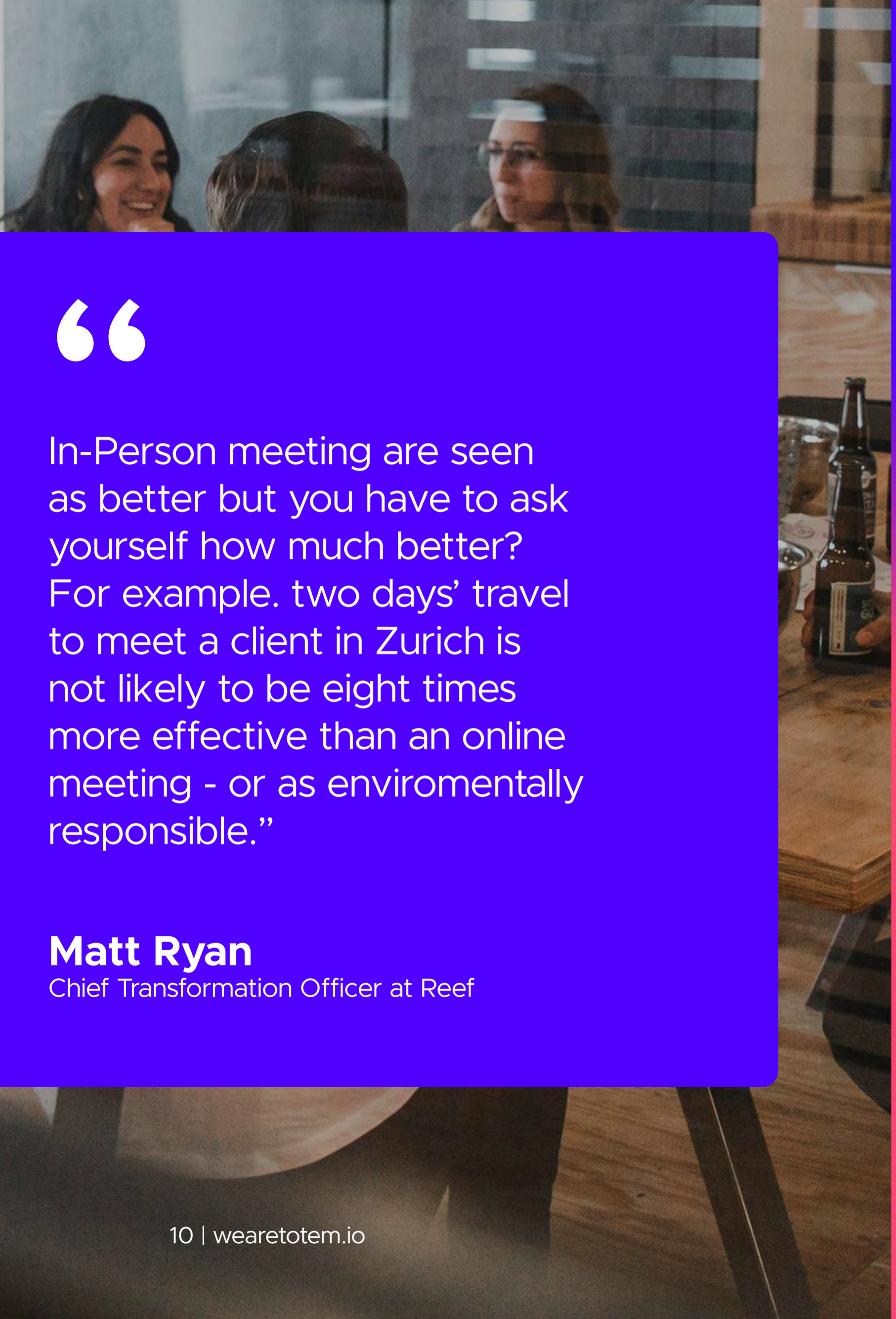
Regardless of whether you're in the finance sector, hospitality or even retail, the environment you operate in sets the tone and value associated with the experience. For example, when you walk into a high-end watch store to purchase an Audemars Piguet or Rolex, you'll expect a different level of service than if you were walking into a budget-friendly store to purchase a Casio or a similar-level alternative. Equally, in the finance sector, a private equity or wealth management firm looking to attract high-value customers would have a distinctly different office from more budget-friendly, consumer-focused bank.

“

Digital hospitality as a concept resonates with me - yes, content is what matters, but I would like that content to feel more Allica. If I'm doing a Teams call with a potential client or partner, it kind of feels like I've agreed to meet them in Costa Coffee.”

**Conrad Ford**

Chief Product Strategy Officer  
at Allica Bank



“

In-Person meetings are seen as better but you have to ask yourself how much better? For example, two days' travel to meet a client in Zurich is not likely to be eight times more effective than an online meeting - or as environmentally responsible.”

**Matt Ryan**

Chief Transformation Officer at Reef

## The Current State of Digital Client Engagement

# Why is Digital Hospitality so important?

Digital Hospitality, therefore, is important in continuing that same level of prestige that exists offline and transferring that to the online experience. Admittedly, given the critical nature of high-value transactions within the financial sector, face-to-face meetings are often seen as more valuable than digital engagements. However, whilst in-person will always play a vital role, changes in working patterns and a focus on responsible travel - from both an ESG and 'best use of time' perspective - mean that more and more interactions are taking place across digital channels.

Both firms and their advisors must adopt a more proactive approach to client engagement and demonstrate that they are able to add real value to the investment equation, with personalised, high-quality client experiences. At Reef, we encourage firms to put themselves in their client's shoes and ask, is your Digital Hospitality up to scratch?



# Strategies for Enhancing Digital Client Engagement

Enhancing digital client engagement is essential for providing value, building trust, and fostering loyalty in a digital-first world. This section explores key strategies offering a roadmap for financial services to connect more effectively with their clients online.

## Deliver Seamless Brand Experiences

One of the problems that many financial institutions face when trying to enhance their digital client engagement is the range of channels available to them. For instance, learning what works in terms of engagement on one platform, might not apply to another, leading to an inconsistent brand message.

The most important strategy for building brand consistency is to first create or solidify your [brand strategy](#). Once established, all marketing and correspondence from your brand should adhere to the defined strategy, thus ensuring that the tone of voice, values and messaging all remain consistent with one another.





## Personalisation and Innovative Content Strategies

Now is the era of Netflix, Spotify and on-demand content that can be delivered to a customer based on its relevance, resonance and popularity. In many ways then, financial service firms need to think and act like the aforementioned media giants, if they're going to stand out from their competitors. Put simply, financial institutions need to diversify their content.

In practice, content diversification for financial institutions can be achieved through embracing the full range of multimedia available. Gone are the days of just eBooks, emails and blogs. Today, the modern financial provider should be readily utilising podcasts, videos, webinars, online courses, quizzes, live streams and interactive workshops to achieve increased engagement. Research from Brightcove shows that [95%](#) of B2B buyers say video plays an important role in deciding their purchase. Meanwhile, when it comes to creating awareness of business-related problems, just 11% prefer whitepapers.

## Reducing Friction in Client Interactions

In the financial sector, reducing friction in client interactions is paramount to enhancing customer experience and fostering loyalty. Friction in the context of client interactions refers to any obstacle or hindrance that customers encounter that may deter them from completing a transaction, signing up for a new service, or fully engaging with a financial institution. These barriers can range from cumbersome sign-up processes and slow response times to complex navigation or inadequate customer support. The outcomes of such are manifold, leading to decreased satisfaction, lowered conversion rates, and potentially damaging a firm's reputation.

The significance of frictionless experiences cannot be overstated, particularly in an era where word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing holds considerable sway over consumer decisions. According to research, [74%](#) of consumers identify WOM as a key influencer in their purchasing choices, underscoring the power of personal recommendations and the potential damage of negative experiences. In the context of financial services, a single friction-filled encounter can not only deter a customer from completing a transaction but can also prompt them to share their negative experience with others, amplifying the adverse impact on the brand's image.





## Strategies for Enhancing Digital Client Engagement

To mitigate these risks and capitalise on the positive effects of WOM marketing, financial institutions can adopt several strategies aimed at reducing friction in client interactions:

### **Streamline Processes:**

Simplify sign-up forms, application processes, and transactions. Explore SSO (Single sign on) for clients and ensure that customers can easily navigate through these processes without unnecessary steps that could deter completion.

### **Enhance Customer Support:**

Provide timely, efficient, and multiple channels of support (including chat, email, phone, and social media) to address customer queries and concerns promptly.

### **Leverage Technology:**

Utilise technology to offer personalised experiences, reducing the cognitive load on customers by presenting them with content that best suits their needs and preferences.

### **Maintain Consistent Design:**

Maintain a uniform look and ensure all digital environments match the physical ones - to align your brand's identity. This makes it easier for customers to recognise and engage with your services.

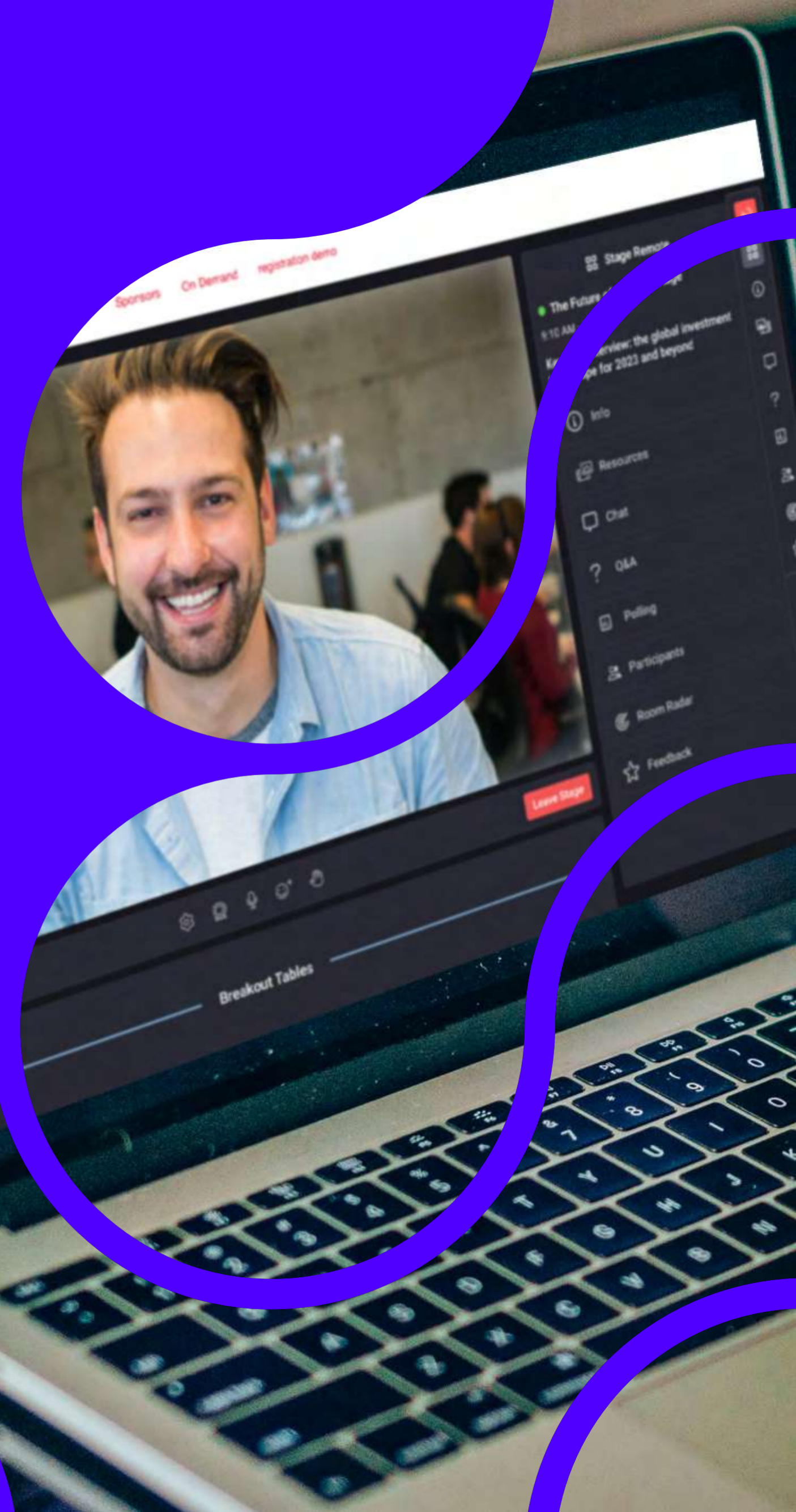
### **Motivate Employees:**

Encourage your staff to deliver exceptional service by recognising and rewarding their efforts in creating positive customer experiences. A motivated team is more likely to go the extra mile for clients, contributing to a seamless engagement process.

By focusing on these areas, financial institutions can significantly reduce friction in client interactions, enhancing the overall experience. This not only fosters loyalty and satisfaction among current clients but also amplifies positive WOM marketing, drawing in new customers through the most powerful endorsement of all: personal recommendation.



# Forging the Future of Finance: **The Indispensable Role of Digital Engagement**



## The Indispensable Role of Digital Engagement

The evolution of digital client engagement marks a pivotal shift in the cultivation and nurturing of customer relationships, highlighting an unprecedented focus on how technology can enhance client interactions. This transformation is not merely about adopting new technologies but redefining the essence of customer engagement, making it more accessible, personalised, and aligned with the emerging trends of sustainability and digital innovation. The future of financial services, characterised by the need for flexibility, environmental responsibility, and technological advancement, demands a strategic approach that integrates these elements seamlessly into the client experience.

Reef, embodies this strategic imperative by providing a unified platform that consolidates a financial firm's digital estate. It offers a single access point to a diverse range of digital content, from on-demand videos, articles, and podcasts to live experiences like webinars, AGMs and investor meetings. This integration ensures that digital engagement is not just an adjunct to physical interactions but a core component of the client experience, mirroring the quality and prestige of in-person services.

The significance of platforms like Reef transcends mere convenience, underscoring the necessity of digital engagement as a fundamental aspect of business strategy. The future financial services landscape, with its focus on making the sector more accessible, more sustainable through reduced travel, and the personalisation of client interactions, highlights the need for a robust digital engagement strategy. Platforms like Reef play a crucial role in this context, offering benefits that directly align with these future trends:



### **Brand consistency:**

Delivers seamless brand experiences across the digital estate, fostering trust and recognition.



### **Increased efficiency:**

Enhances workflow processes, saving time and resources.



### **Robust Security:**

Protects the privacy and integrity of valuable client data, reinforcing the foundation of trust.



### **Scalability:**

Ensures the capability to accommodate growing business demands smoothly, meeting and exceeding client expectations.



### **First-party Data:**

Provides access to critical engagement insights, enabling strategic decision-making.



### **Personalisation:**

Offers relevant, customised content experiences across various media, significantly improving user engagement and satisfaction.

“

We are now at a tipping point where the cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of investing in your digital engagement. By taking steps now, you can create a better brand experience for your audiences and deliver value across your entire business.”

**Matt Ryan**

Chief Transformation Officer at Reef

## The Indispensable Role of Digital Engagement

### Conclusion

In merging the strategic insights from the evolving digital landscape with the practical benefits offered by Reef, it becomes evident that digital client engagement and Digital Hospitality are not merely advantageous but essential. The transformation towards digital excellence, driven by platforms like Reef, not only addresses the current challenges of digital engagement but also paves the way for a future where financial services are more aligned with individual client needs and societal values. This journey towards digital maturity is intricate, yet it represents a viable pathway to enduring success and deeper, more meaningful client relationships in the financial sector.

[Request a Demo](#)



## About Reef

Reef is Totem's digital arm for audience engagement. The platform provides a single destination to access a financial firm's digital estate, whether on-demand content such as video, articles, podcasts, or live experiences like webinars, investor meetings and AGMs.

Reef ensures financial institutions achieve a high level of brand consistency across their digital estate, delivering a unified experience for users that matches the quality and prestige displayed in the physical world.

Ready to start your  
**Digital Engagement  
Journey?**

Book your free Digital  
Engagement Review Now

