

Q&A

10 minutes with...



Redspire and Microsoft are working together to help global capital markets clients take the steps towards automations, connected workflows and an intelligent middle office. Our editorial team caught up with Microsoft's Richard Gaster to get his insights into the challenges and opportunities the sector is facing and how Microsoft is driving forward digital transformation.

Richard, thanks for joining us today. Tell me a little bit about your role and the ways in which you work with account managed partners in Capital Markets?

As a Microsoft Business Applications Specialist for Customer Engagement my role is to provide solutions to business problems and give thought leadership to better ways of working. Industry aligned, with 12 years' experience in Financial Services, I'm able to show the art of the possible for Capital Markets clients while sharing industry insight and best practices from our experience as a team and as an organisation.

Key clients include the UK's leading Asset and Investment Management, Pension Funds and Retirement and Investment Trusts, as well as Business and Retail Banking outside of the Capital Markets space.

My clients are most interested in two key areas. Risks within the firm and risks from changing demands. The risk from within lies with Big Data, legacy technology and process. Process Automation lies at the heart of this, looking to build automation and workflows that integrates between legacy systems to save manual keying and needless repetition of tasks across their organisation.

The second area is the changing demands of clients and the push for rich insights into their behaviour. This allows them to be proactive in communication at a time that resonates with them, based on what the data and AI is highlighting.

What interests me most is the **unlimited** use cases for automation and how unique they can be for each organisation, even though they are in the same industry. That said, every customer's technology estate is different but often have the same common problems of legacy technology and processes. Working with partners and

customers to build out these use cases really interests me and has really tangible time and cost benefits.

Tell me a little bit about the different types of organisations you work with in Capital Markets and some of the unique challenges they face.

Through various Mergers and Acquisitions we see many different types of organisations that have never truly 'merged' from a technology perspective, creating vast estates of siloed data.

We also see clear definitions within these organisations where Investments are a different organisation to Sales, Marketing and Retail where there is little integration... even though the latter feeds investments.

Are there any sub-verticals that are leading the way with digital investments and transformation? Who are the challengers and disruptors?

There are certainly some who are seeing the benefits of a Single 360-degree view of their customer and are investing in Customer Engagement Platforms like **Dynamics 365** but they are still early on the journey towards a truly integrated platform enriched by **Machine Learning** and **Artificial Intelligence**. It's a challenging industry where clients are intergenerational and relationships are not transactional but it won't be long until traditional Capital Markets will be Data-First organisations, enriching their existing relationships with clients.

Tell me a little about the Microsoft difference for Capital Markets organisations. What are Microsoft cloud tools doing our competitors aren't?

Integration is the key differentiator that separates Microsoft from others, as you can see from the now infamous illustration that showcases our cloud technology in comparison to our competitors (see illustration 1).

Automating business processes through our low code **Power Platform**, across apps, flows, RPA, & Virtual Agents with over 400 API connectors really resonates with customers. This is only empowered further by the native integration to our Office and Dynamics suites.

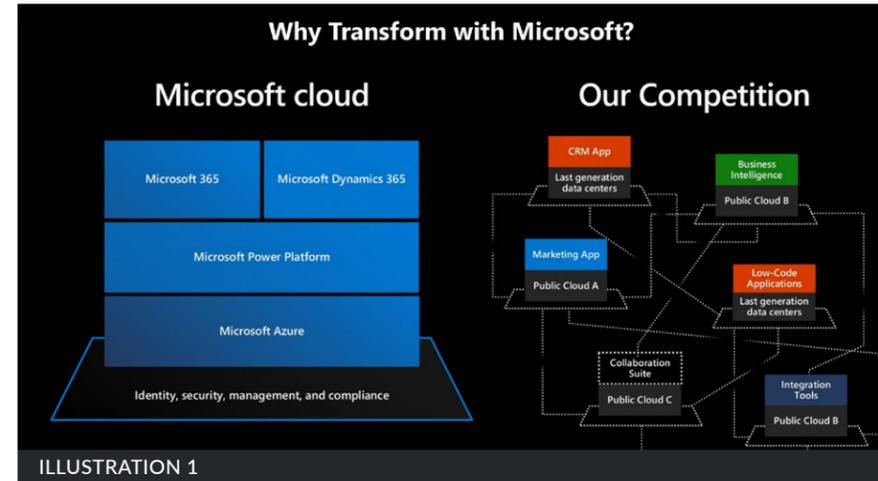
What are the common themes your customers are talking to you about just now?

The key priorities are automation of simple manual processes that have arisen due to legacy systems lack of integration. This can be simple things like Foreign Exchange on certain funds, pulling in Citi files, standardising them and emailing out.

Additionally, remote on-boarding and project management through **Power Apps** and **Virtual Agents** is showing answers to immediate needs during the pandemic.

What's the single biggest priority for customers in Capital Markets in terms of data and processes to act on?

The single biggest priority and challenge to overcome is still the fundamental issue of bringing data together and breaking down the silos. This applies to the organisations within them as well as their data.



What's been the biggest challenge this year?

Reacting to ongoing Covid-19 crisis to best support their clients and staff has been a real challenge in Financial Services in general. Each of the verticals I work in have had to react tactically and at pace to maintain business continuity.

There have been cultural and behavioural shifts though. The pandemic has sped up the requirements and mindset of Capital Markets and the wider Financial Services industry to transform at pace. The work being done today is building a great foundation for tomorrow's digital transformation. FSI has undoubtedly become more digitally and behaviorally agile.

There's no doubt 2020 has been challenging. The pandemic has diverted planned, strategic priorities. What are looking forward to most in the year ahead in Capital Markets?

The first big fund manager to go 'data first' in their approach. It's in everyone's strategy and I can see some big strides happening.

Talk to me about the middle office wins you've seen first hand with the Microsoft Cloud, Dynamics and Power Platform.

I've seen great time and investment poured into project management with change-making front end apps, as well as automation for approvals directly within teams. It's also been great to see the use of our AI builder for image capture of documents and the replacement of manual forms into a Power App with back end flows to email out to relevant parties.

I've seen limitless use cases. And whilst there's some uniform wins cross-sector,

there are use case benefits unique to each organisation.

What's the value of Single Customer View in Capital Markets?

SCV is certainly on the radar for my Capital Markets customers. The requirements will be more directed to funds under management, fee income generated as well as relationship trees for those intergenerational and family ties.

Having the ability to see all transactions and communications really helps feed the AI in providing actionable insights.

What's the appetite for investment in automation and AI technology in the sector? Are you knocking an open door?

I've been pleasantly surprised to knock on open doors throughout all my customers when it comes to Power Automate along with our new RPA capabilities. The biggest challenge is not the appetite for investment but where to start. Everyone's pain points and priorities differ and this drives the automation start point.

How has the pandemic affected the industry? And how quickly have Capital Markets organisations adapted compared to Banking / Insurance counterparts.

Capital Markets are traditionally more reliant on their long standing relationships with their client base than that of more transactional customers found in retail banking and insurance. As such their pace of digital transformation is usually behind the others. That said, the need to spin up new

technologies to support their clients and staff in response to the pandemic has shown that they can transform at pace. This momentum in transformation created by the pandemic should see a continued focus moving forward.

Have you seen any competitor case studies in this space recently where you've thought 'man, wish I'd worked on that project, that's really well done?'

There are a number of case studies where traditional automation solutions from Pega and Blue Prism would have been great to test out our new RPA capabilities within Power Automate. We are now in this market and I hope to see similar case studies from the Microsoft Power Platform.

Who would your ideal customer be?

I'm always up for a chat with any Capital Markets organisation exploring a data-first approach, with the desire to enrich the deep relationships they have with their clients.

If you could have coffee with one fictional money mogul, who would it be?

I love Billions! In season 5 the new rival to Bobby Axelrod is Mike Prince whose beliefs and culture are very much more aligned to Microsoft's. A humble leader who's aware of the consequences of modern life, meaning he's aware of environmental impact. His humble and giving character resonates well with me. He touches a lot on impact investing too which is certainly a hot topic in the industry at the moment.



Redspire and Microsoft have partnered to offer a range of resources to Account-Managed clients in Capital Markets groups. **Find out more about our envisioning Catalyst programme, see our range of workshops or view our resources.**