



Accelerating success in financial services

**5 essential actions from the PwC
Global Compliance Survey 2025**





Introduction

Financial services (FS) companies are woven into many aspects of today's commercial and social ecosystems and have felt a significant impact from disruption and changes in the macro risk landscape. New rules and regulations have emerged—a common response to disruption—with the aim of promoting stability and bolstering trust in these ecosystems.

While well intended, new rules always come with some degree of additional complexity and cost, at least until companies can adapt and optimise their response. The challenge for FS companies is that the wave of regulatory change has felt constant, with new requirements in areas such as financial crime, cyber security and data protection, AI and digital resilience—all happening against a backdrop of ongoing geopolitical shifts.

PwC US's [Next in banking and capital markets 2025](#), explores the regulatory environment further and suggests that even if regulatory requirements are relaxed, regulators will continue to use their mandate to protect the ecosystem, and those that rely on it (including dealmakers). This combination of regulatory change, competitive and cost pressure and a shifting global landscape is making the environment

extremely challenging for traditional players. This includes new entrants, such as neobanks and platform companies that offer embedded finance, providing new and seamless ways to pay and approve loans and make payments/transfers. In the US, there has also been some consolidation of smaller banks to compete with larger ones.

All these factors point to a new era of competitiveness with compliance leaders having to respond by streamlining and optimising processes and freeing up resources to focus on customers and new initiatives. It also means that, regardless of the changes coming down the line for FS companies, the role of compliance leaders will remain important—and the opportunities to be transformative bigger than ever.

Five actions that FS compliance leaders can take now

- 01 | Find the right value balance
- 02 | Optimise the operating model
- 03 | Connect the digital dots
- 04 | Mind the gap
- 05 | Pioneer culture



77%

of FS respondents say they need compliance support in relation to digital transformation

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Find the right value balance

Agree on a compliance vision and strategy that finds the right balance between value protection and value creation, factoring in the Board’s appetite for cost control, speed and innovation.

01

Compliance investment in FS is still heavily driven by regulatory change (55% of FS respondents in our survey ranked this at the top) with compliance leaders focused on risk mitigation in traditional areas like data privacy and protection (58%), anti-bribery and corruption (51%), FS-specific regulation (43%) and consumer protection (25%). The need to conform with these rules is, of course, non-negotiable and important for trust in the industry. Though management’s response is becoming more nuanced—still making sure that risk and regulatory matters are addressed quickly, but also focusing on what the processes will look like after remediation so that they are sustainable longer-term and cost effective.

Our survey showed that FS organisations are planning a range of strategic initiatives that will need compliance capabilities, including digital transformation (77%), new products and services (58%) and new business models (47%). The door is open for compliance leaders to help the business move faster on ‘value creation’ opportunities and innovation, which in turn can bring about more cost efficient and effective compliance processes—faster. This is easier said than done. Regulatory change, reporting and enforcement still consume the majority of available time and focus for compliance functions. The good news is that 61% of respondents say that compliance is already engaged at the pre-development stage of new products and services, which is important to helping navigate threats early (e.g. horizon scanning). Nevertheless, this still leaves room for some functions to relook at when and where they get involved; for example, providing input to growth initiatives around AI adoption (including responsible AI frameworks), data transformation and new sales channels, delivery models and partnerships. The first step is to lay out what the right balance looks like and the investment and actions needed to achieve it.

Optimise the operating model

Design a streamlined operating model to overcome complexity and cost and embrace a unified approach that shatters silos to connect functions, share data and reimagine processes.

A full 90% of FS respondents report their compliance landscape has become more complex over the last three years. This, combined with economic disruption and cost pressures—some of which have been caused by a breakdown in trust and confidence—is driving compliance leaders to relook at how they can strike the right balance of cost and conformance. PwC US's [Risk and Compliance Reimagined](#) paper explores ideas on how some are changing their risk and compliance models to unlock hidden savings and performance gains. In addition to automation, which has become a 'must have' rather than a 'nice to have', compliance leaders have had to pull various levers to achieve this. Examples include better alignment across functions (integrated assurance), rationalising controls (to calibrate effort in areas with a lower risk profile) and the use of different operational models—including outsourcing and managed services. Risks related to third parties have also come under the spotlight as global value chains evolve,

particularly with technology providers. PwC's paper, [How managed services can bring peace of mind to DORA third-party risk management](#), explores examples of how some companies are trying different approaches to new regulatory requirements.

Some FS companies have also taken the opportunity to relook at the demarcation between the traditional organisational lines in their compliance model, including responsibilities between the first and second lines. This helps to not only reinforce the right risk ownership and 'culture of compliance' but moves the focus on risk detection to those that know the customer best in the first line. This is particularly important for FS given the emphasis in the industry to grow responsibly. Practically, this might involve risk and control officers, for example, being embedded in the business, creating a line '1.5' that can help the business transform faster and with more agility.



50%

cite increased productivity, efficiencies and cost savings from technology

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Connect the digital dots

Lead the charge with cutting-edge technology to shape and redefine the target delivery model, including seamless data integration.

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Our survey found that the FS industry continues to make progress in embracing compliance technology. The use of technology to respond to regulation (‘RegTech’) has been a significant trend for the industry, along with the technology and data-led approaches increasingly used by the supervisory authorities (‘SupTech’). FS companies are more likely than those in other industries to be using, and investing more in, technology for compliance and transaction monitoring (84%), training (83%) and customer due diligence assessments (81%). Moreover, they are seeing benefits from this investment with 50% of those from FS companies citing increased productivity, efficiencies and cost savings from technology—compared to the average of 43% across all sectors.

This means the door is open for compliance leaders to maintain the momentum and go further, ensuring compliance is at the table to help shape company-wide digital initiatives for mutual benefit. A number of companies are looking at how AI, data and automation can be used to streamline and enhance decision-making and customer interactions. This is particularly important where there is an ethical dimension to them, for example, ensuring fairness in decisions on loan and credit applications or customer complaint handling. Our [Risk Link](#) tool, for example, has been developed with AI technology to track regulatory changes in near real time to allow companies to take a connected view of their risk and control taxonomy so they can understand and respond to their obligations faster and more effectively.

Mind the gap

Compare your present compliance skills with future needs and design a comprehensive strategy to connect the dots.

30%

report a gap in data management and analytical skills

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04

Our survey found that 46% of FS respondents still prioritise industry knowledge/acumen as a key skill in compliance, with 69% citing new regulations, risks and business models as primary factors in determining their talent models. Changes to the regulatory risk landscape are, however, causing compliance leaders to consider capabilities that go beyond traditional industry acumen and regulatory knowhow. 30% of FS respondents report a gap in data management and analytical skills. While only one in four respondents consider AI skills to be important in effective compliance, we anticipate this increasing over time as adoption accelerates. Compliance professionals will not only need to use AI, but also understand the risks attached to it (e.g. misinformation, IP rights,

fraud and cyber risks). Our [AI Jobs Barometer](#) explores related broader themes on the impact of AI on the future workforce.

Competition for such AI, technology and similar skills is driving up the cost of recruitment and forcing companies to redouble effort on nurturing and retaining such talent. This includes building more flexibility and innovation into talent models, including sharing across the organisation (e.g. with Internal Audit or business teams), hiring technical roles like data scientists and creating communities of interest inside and outside the organisation to bolster learning.

Pioneer culture

Leverage the influence of compliance to put ethics and behaviours at the heart of strategy.

One of the biggest challenges for FS companies is keeping pace with expectations on ethics and behaviours, which underpin trust in the industry. As regulator, investor and customer expectations change—in response to, for example, new services, social trends and crises—culture needs to adapt accordingly. FS companies are deploying a range of mechanisms to achieve this. Our survey found that, of the factors considered most important in creating a strong compliance culture, respondents selected senior management sponsorship/’tone at the top’ (56%) and employee training and communication (45%) at the top. Training is also an area where companies are using technology extensively (83%)—and planning on investing more to pilot and deploy AI (54%).

While training and technology are vital tools in helping embed the right ethics and behaviours throughout the organisation, it starts ‘at the top’. The fines and sanctions faced by executives in many jurisdictions help to sharpen the focus on behaviours, but it takes leaders in the business to champion culture day-to-day and pioneer new approaches. This is where compliance leaders can use their influence to ensure culture is built into strategy and decision-making and underpinned with sufficient investment, incentives and monitoring. Similarly, challenging the business—and themselves—on driving efficiency and simplicity (using technology) is another way compliance leaders can elevate their value. The fact that 59% of FS respondents believe compliance leadership has significant influence on the wider business strategy (which is higher than other industries) is a good start but suggests there is still room to do more.

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Further reading

Read the full PwC Global Compliance Survey 2025 [here](#). To learn more about related topics, please see:

- [2025 Horizon scanning for assurance functions](#)
- [Asset and wealth management revolution 2024](#)
- [Global Economic Crime Survey 2024](#)
- [Global M&A Trends in Financial Services](#)
- [How managed services can bring peace of mind to DORA third-party risk management](#)
- [Next in banking and capital markets 2025](#)
- [Risk and Compliance Reimagined](#)
- [Productivity or pioneering? Your industry’s GenAI adoption play](#)
- [Strategic guide for Financial Institutions on the brink of transformation to capture cloud potential](#)

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