WealthTech Insights with Roland Collins: The Tech Horizon and its Impact on the FinTech World

Our series on experts and their insights into the world of FinTech continues with Roland Collins, cofounder and CTO of InvestEdge—the wealth-management solution that serves ultra-high-net-worth accounts and much more.

[Roland Collins](#), CTO and Cofounder of [InvestEdge](#)

Roland Collins is no stranger to the finance industry. His first job was developing software for PNC Advisors, where he took part in developing PNC's Co-Pilot platform, which was used to manage portfolios and trade orders. The product was a great success, and this pushed Roland and another former employee from PNC, Robert Stewart (current CEO and cofounder of InvestEdge), to launch a startup. That was in 2000, and since that time the company has developed into one of the leaders in wealth-management solutions.

Roland talked about what he sees brewing in FinTech, and how these new trends and possibilities will shape the future of InvestEdge and the industry itself.

Java versus .Net

When asked about why they use Java and .Net at InvestEdge, Roland spoke at length about his feeling that Java technologies are starting to feel dated. Additionally, the "openness" that used to exist in the community seems to be giving way towards more enterprise-driven interests.

On the other hand, Roland cites .Net as a community-driven effort where people can propose fresh ideas and aren't afraid to experiment with different features and functionalities. At some point, Roland feels that Java will fall behind and remain monolithic and difficult to tune, and that it will fade out as one of the top technologies for new projects.

Trends in data privacy and interactivity

The new General Data Protection Regulation put into place this year was a hot topic across the entire business sector. Roland sees data privacy and data management as a continuing trend that requires patience and discipline to get right, especially in the finance industry where data is dollars.

Roland also highlighted the fact that the audience and the people who consume software are shifting towards a younger audience. These young people have different expectations for software products and expect a modern interface, more interactivity, and more connectivity.

> "Financial advisors are making different demands of our tools as well. So I think, as you see, [there is] a generational shift in the people using our technologies and being served by our tools; it really changes the focus on how you deliver your solutions, and we're going to be seeing a lot more focus on usability-oriented tooling going forward."

Another trend that Roland identified is tied in with the modernization of technology—the interaction between customers and advisors. The real-time experience is something that the younger generation is used to and something that FinTech companies are striving to achieve with enhanced chat bots and other tools.

How to improve human efficiency through AI

Roland doesn't believe that robots, no matter how smart they get, will ever replace humans. In his view, automation is not the same thing as AI because AI is machine learning. Automation—and specifically smart algorithms—can best serve lower-end markets, like small brokerage accounts. When it comes to higher-end investments and ultra-high-net-worth accounts, there must be a human element that is part of the service model.

> "I don't think the goal of any automation technology is truly to replace humans at the end of the day. I think the goal of these technologies is to make us more efficient and enable us to focus on other aspects of the business that we couldn't before because we didn't have the time. And I think you see this in a lot of industries—a lot of industries bring in automation and expect to cut the workforce, but instead they keep growing."

InvestEdge is developing its middle-office automation to enable more efficiency in the industry. So instead of concentrating on managing the middle office, the advisors, banks, and wealth organizations can spend more time focusing on the customer, bringing in more customers, and growing their business.

AI for investment predictive analytics

Roland explained how InvestEdge will soon be looking into AI tech. Certain automation technologies could allow InvestEdge to understand whether customers are going to receive information in a positive light or in a negative fashion—for example, how will a customer respond to receiving a given performance return or chart? But that is only one aspect of the prediction capabilities:

> "On the other side, you could use AI tech to look for performance anomalies, for instance. You can train it to look for things where, for example, an asset wasn't priced quite correctly or maybe the description on that bond came in a little bit

incorrectly. You can have it start to look for outliers in your process and really improve the quality of your data."

Roland also sees the implementation of AI as a potentially helpful tool for the InvestEdge compliance engine, allowing certain alerts to pop up to the user when making investment decisions. But at the end of the day, these possibilities serve to enhance InvestEdge's business and how customers do business with them, and are not intended to replace any current processes and systems.

Final thoughts

As discussed in the main article on InvestEdge, two decades since its inception the company continues to be a trailblazer in both business and tech. InvestEdge has a strong grasp of what the community needs and how best to serve their loyal clients, which is why they are exploring new avenues like smart automation and AI technologies. The high customer retention at InvestEdge is proof that what they have been doing is right, and if they continue making the right moves, they will eclipse the rest of the field.

Written by Vasyl Soloshchuk, CEO and co-owner at INSART*, FinTech & Java engineering company. Vasyl is also the author of* WealthTech Club*, which conducts research into Fortune and Startup Robo-advisor and Wealth Management companies in terms of the technology ecosystem.*