FINTECH FUTURES

BankingTech

Awards win for SmartStream: leading innovation in reconciliation (and more)

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At the recent Banking Tech Awards, SmartStream won in the category of Best Reconciliation Solution. Whilst this is certainly testament to the firm's indomitable industry standing, it is more a mark of recognition of its unparalleled innovation and agility in an ever-diversifying data landscape. As a standard-bearer for advanced technology in reconciliation systems, from being the first to introduce integrated workflows and flexible user interfaces, SmartStream is now leading in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) solutions in the reconciliation space.

Robin Hasson, global head of reconciliation at SmartStream, offers insights into trends in reconciliation, and how SmartStream has consistently built on its heritage whilst remaining impressively agile and innovative to keep at the cutting edge of reconciliation systems and beyond.

"Reconciliation needs have become greatly diversified", Hasson explains. "It used to be very much a back-office requirement for validation and control, but there's a much greater need now to ensure quality throughout the entire data lifecycle" he says.

Hasson also indicates that the types of data institutions deal with have become vastly more diverse, and companies are looking to reconciliation solutions for data checks across many aspects of business operations. Certainly, whilst core demands for reconciliation systems remain consistent – that it supports compliance, offers high efficiency, low cost and automation – there is a growing need for increased capacity to take on a greater complexity of tasks and data formats.

Robin Hasson, SmartStream: "Whether it's AI, ML or cloud, there has to be real value behind what the service delivers"

The demand for AI and cloud-based systems is almost universal, says Hasson. But, he emphasises how tech innovation in the reconciliation space must be purposive and deliver real business benefits. SmartStream has succeeded, he explains, by innovating where businesses will benefit most.

"Whether it's AI, ML or cloud, there has to be real value behind what the service delivers. That means identifying with absolute clarity, the use case that really does need to be solved with AI."

Hasson explains how AI solutions often come to market "because it looks good, it's appealing… but actually, you have to validate that AI can solve the problem". Providing real business benefit through innovation requires a deep interrogation of the challenges businesses face and where and how AI can truly leverage benefits.

With a dedicated Innovations Lab, led by a team of data scientists, SmartStream has kept ahead of the curve by working closely with clients to identify needs, challenges and integrated solutions of best fit. This approach ensures SmartStream can harness its heritage of expertise whilst remaining agile in delivering best value through innovation.

Ultimately, SmartStream's ethos in AI implementation is efficiency and accuracy. Where reconciliation used to be an entirely manual process, automation has reduced this to just a small percentage of manual effort. But through AI and ML, this remaining percentage of manual effort can be eliminated. SmartStream's Affinity module learns from human activity and repeats it in data-matching activity. Importantly, Affinity's ML provides explanations for its working: it demonstrates its reasoning, which provides added assurance and insights for businesses. With such a powerful tool at their fingertips, businesses can save time, reduce costs, and ensure the quality of their data and information, which in turn boots reputational gain. "Resilience is also an imperative in today's climate," Hasson says, "and our solutions certainly help businesses build that."

The SmartStream Innovations Lab continues to work on prototyping, and, as Hasson suggests, "we're looking at some really exciting advances in the future, which will push the frontiers of benefits for business even further". This includes evaluation of more interactive and intelligent capabilities, to improve operational efficiency and transparency. Ultimately, this technology will assist users by identifying points of interest and generating insights. "This will mean greater business intelligence and better business insights."

SmartStream has proven itself consistently as both a trusted partner and major innovator in the reconciliation space and beyond, counting amongst its clients the majority of first tier banks in the UK. Its systems, most recently SmartStream Air, now on version 8.0, provide firms with the powerful tools needed to reconcile vast oceans of diverse data, providing accuracy and supporting compliance and the requirements of regulatory frameworks.

Whilst reconciliation is the core business offering, SmartStream stands out because of its strength and expertise in other services as well, also providing solutions for collateral management, asset servicing, fees and expense management, reference data services, and cash and liquidity management.

It is clear that SmartStream's strengths lie equally in its heritage of delivering trusted reconciliation solutions with being genuinely agile and at the forefront of technological innovation – in reconciliation and beyond. Its recent win at the Banking Tech Awards is indeed a suitable accolade for a firm that continues to set the bar high and deliver truly valuable solutions to its customers. And, with new technologies at its fingertips, we can expect to see more exciting solution releases in the year ahead.