

14 FinAi execs to watch in 2026

FinAi News features top financial institution execs from UBS, BNY, Bank of America, more

by **Whitney McDonald** and **Vaidik Trivedi** — November 5, 2025 in **Strategy** 👍 0
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Banks, fintechs, credit unions and tech giants are looking to leadership to spearhead AI strategy as the technology continues to improve speed, efficiency and overall productivity in the industry.

FI leaders are experimenting with AI, deploying it and hiring talent to support AI initiatives, which have become priorities.

This year, more “chief” AI titles have emerged, more agentic AI startups have caught the eye of venture capitalists, and more startups are developing tools to fix business challenges with emerging technology.

FinAi News is pleased to present 14 FinAi executives who are positioned to lead innovation in 2026.

Daniele Magazzeni, chief AI officer, UBS

Daniele Magazzeni was appointed **UBS** first chief AI officer in October.

He oversees the firm's overall AI strategy, according to an Oct. 16 UBS release. He is priorities are:

- Enhancing employee productivity;
- Boosting customer experience;
- Ensuring effectiveness of AI-powered tools; and
- Maintaining the AI standard.



Courtesy/Bloomberg

Magazzeni joined Switzerland-based UBS from **JPMorgan**, where he was chief analytics officer for Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Sarthak Pattanaik, chief data and AI officer, BNY

Sarthak Pattanaik was appointed chief data and AI officer at BNY in June.

The \$2.1 trillion BNY continues to prioritize AI deployment and is developing **117 AI solutions**. It also has deployed digital agents within its API marketplace and updated its enterprise AI platform, Eliza, in the third quarter.

Pattanaik has held several roles at BNY since 2013, including managing director, chief information officer of clearance and collateral management and head of the AI hub.



Sarthak Pattanaik

Alex McLeod, founder and CEO, Parlay Finance

Alex McLeod is addressing the gap in small business lending with AI-driven loan origination at Alexandria, Va.-based **Parlay Finance**.

For small businesses, “there has been this long-standing problem with access to capital,” McLeod previously told *FinAi News*.

Parlay Finance announced in June that it had **raised \$2 million in a funding round** led by fintech venture capitalist **Jam Fintop**.



Alex McLeod

This year, the company partnered with AI-driven credit decisioning tech provider **Stratify** to boost small business lending approval rates, McLeod said.

In October, Parlay announced a bank partnership with **First Internet Bank**. The \$6.1 billion bank will tap Parlay's AI-native loan intelligence system and anticipates up to a 50% increase in efficiencies within lending, according to an Oct. 16 release.



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Prior to founding Parlay in 2022, McLeod spent five years at **Deloitte**.

Darius Wise, President and CEO, Red Rocks Credit Union

Darius Wise is leading a digital facelift at **Red Rocks Credit Union** with a new core and AI implementation.

The \$330 million, Littleton, Colo.-based bank recently refreshed its core, tapping **KeyStone Corelation** and is using the Interface.ai platform for an AI-driven, member-facing tool, Wise previously told *FinAi News*.

Red Rocks will likely add more AI-driven solutions in the next 12 to 24 months, he said.

Wise was appointed CEO at Red Rocks in 2023 and has been with the bank since 2019.



Darius Wise

Adam Famularo, CEO, WorkFusion

Adam Famularo leads New York-based agentic AI startup **WorkFusion**, which has raised \$386.6 million in total funding.

The most recent round, closed in September, raised \$45 million led by Toronto-based **Georgian**.

Agentic AI startups continue to gain the attention of investors, raising \$2.8 billion in the first half of 2025, according to investment group **Prosus**.

Famularo used the latest \$45 million to pay down debt, he previously told *FinAi News*. "In Q1 2026, you'll see an expanded focus beyond AML into fraud," he said.

Adam Famularo

Yoseph West, CEO, Relay Finance

Yoseph West leads business banking and money management platform **Relay Finance**.

Relay clients want tools that help them manage cash, and that's predominantly going to come from AI tooling, West told *FinAi News*.

According to Relay's 2025 Cash Flow Compass report, which surveyed more than 1,000 business owners, 64% of small businesses would trust AI to manage their cash flow, and Relay is ready to provide that.

With AI tooling in demand, Relay clients are also asking for lending services, which the tech provider plans to launch next year.

West co-founded Toronto-based Relay in 2018.



Yoseph West

Diane Rogerson, chief information risk officer, Truist

Diane Rogerson was appointed chief information risk officer of Truist in September.

She joined Truist following the \$544 billion, Charlotte, N.C.-based bank's announcement of its five-year plan, which includes new tech investments, branches and hires.

Prior to Truist, Rogerson was deputy chief technology officer at **Morgan Stanley** and a managing director at JPMorgan.

Diane Rogerson

Vikram Nafde, chief information officer and executive vice president, Webster Bank

Vikram Nafde is executive vice president and chief information officer at \$80 billion **Webster Bank**, where he is responsible for executing the bank's technology strategy.

Nafde, who assumed the role June 2022, shapes the bank's payments and AI roadmap.

The Stamford, Conn.-based bank is deploying AI for AML, fraud detection and cybersecurity, according to *FinAi News'* previous reporting.

Nafde has held senior technology leadership positions at **Bridgewater Associates**, **GE Asset Management**, **Genpact** and **Starwood**.



Vikram Nafde

Jarrett Bruhn, head of data and AI for GPS, Bank of America

Jarrett Bruhn, managing director and global head of data and AI for Global Payments Solutions (GPS) at \$2.6 trillion **Bank of America**, oversees integration of advanced analytics and AI to enhance payment processing and client services for more than 40,000 business clients.

He has been instrumental in pioneering AI applications for real-time liquidity insights and cash flow forecasting, drawing on more than a decade of expertise in machine learning and predictive analytics to support resources, he told *FinAi News*.

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predictive analytics to support treasurers, he told *FinAI News*.

Under Bruhn's leadership, Bank of America in September launched **AskGPS**, a generative AI assistant trained on more than 3,200 internal documents to provide real-time, tailored advisory on products, onboarding and sector-specific strategies, he told *FinAI News*. AskGPS complements other Bank of America tools, including CashPro Forecasting and Intelligent Receivables.

Jarrett Bruhn

Asmau Ahmed, chief AI and data officer, Varo Bank

Asmau Ahmed is the first chief AI and data officer at **Varo Bank**.

Appointed in September, she leads companywide AI and machine learning efforts, focusing on responsible, customer-centric innovations to enhance financial services for the digital bank's clients, according to the bank.

With more than 20 years in technology and finance, Ahmed brings deep expertise from senior roles at **Google X**, Bank of America and **Capital One**.

At Varo, Ahmed is accelerating AI initiatives including machine learning for underwriting, [fraud prevention and detection](#), and positioning the bank as AI-first, Ahmed previously told *FinAI News*.



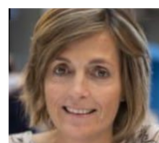
Asmau Ahmed

Elena Alfaro, head of global AI adoption, BBVA

Elena Alfaro is global head of AI adoption at **BBVA**, leading the bank's strategy to integrate generative AI responsibly and at scale.

Her responsibilities include democratizing AI access for more than 125,000 employees, fostering innovation through tailored tools and ensuring ethical deployment in collaboration with legal, compliance and IT security teams.

Key initiatives under Alfaro include growing its [ChatGPT Enterprise licenses to more than 11,000 since 2024](#), creating an internal GPT store with more than 700 custom tools, and partnering with **Google**



Elena Alfaro

Cloud for Gemini in the Workspace app to boost collaboration.

The \$1 trillion bank has deployed AI for:

- Personalized financial advice;
- Fraud prevention and cybersecurity; and
- Enhanced customer service.

Ryan Schoenfeld, co-founder and chief executive, Rational Exponent

AI platform **Rational Exponent**, founded in 2023, emerged from stealth mode in October.

Led by **Ryan Schoenfeld**, Rational Exponent launched re:agent, an enterprise platform that embeds real-time compliance, risk intelligence and decision-making into workflows for banks, according to the company.

With re:agent, banks can tap AI to analyze their policies against relevant regulations, ask if their policies are in line with regulatory requirements and even ask what needs to be augmented or updated to ensure compliance, **Brian Bauer**, vice president of artificial intelligence products Rational Exponent, told *FinAI News*. This saves "a ton" of manual effort, he said.

Ryan Schoenfeld

Barkha Saxena, chief data officer, Chime

Barkha Saxena is the chief data officer at **Chime**, leading the firm's data, analytics, AI and machine learning efforts.

San Francisco-based Chime has had an eventful year; [the fintech went public in June](#), sharing details of its proprietary payment processor and ledger ChimeCore, according to its S-1 filing. Chime also has other proprietary data and AI platforms.

Saxena joined Chime in 2024, after serving as global chief data officer at **McKinsey**, where she guided cross-functional strategy for the firm's first gen AI project, enabling global teams to harness AI for client insights.



Barkha Saxena

Yuval Aloni, co-founder and CEO, esh Group

Yuval Aloni is the co-founder and CEO of **esh Group**, which owns AI-driven digital bank **esh Bank**.

With a keen focus on using AI to disrupt traditional industries, Aloni has spent more than a decade building scalable platforms that prioritize efficiency, transparency and customer empowerment, he told *FinAI News*.

Prior to founding esh in 2016, he was an adviser on AI-driven fintech innovations at early stage startups, optimizing machine learning for fraud detection and predictive analytics, he said.

Yuval Aloni

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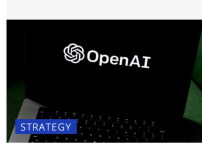
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