IFA DNA
2025
Report

SPECIAL REPORT

Rewriting the adviser's day

Adviser Solutions

Fidelity
INTERNATIONAL

Introduction

Paul Richards, Head of Adviser Distribution, Fidelity Adviser Solutions

For many years now, I have had the privilege of meeting with and talking to advice practitioners as part of my role. Over this time, one thing has become very clear to me – advisers value client relationships and meaningful conversations above all. However, what has also become apparent is that they are unable to spend as much time with clients as they would like. In fact, as this report shows, advisers typically only spend one-third of their time meeting with clients. The majority of the rest of their day is typically spent preparing and writing up reports and plans, conducting research and ensuring regulatory and compliance tasks have been completed.

So, what does an adviser's ideal workday look like? As part of our annual IFA DNA research programme, we thought we would explore this area in more detail and the findings are presented in this IFA DNA special edition. The results confirm advisers want to spend more time with clients and less time on admin and management. However, what our research has unmasked is that there are four distinct adviser profiles and the ideal workday for each look quite different. These are featured within this report and I'm sure you'll be able to recognise some of the characteristics in colleagues past and present and, perhaps, in yourself too.

Of course, the key to achieving a more desirable workday balance is reducing the time spent on tedious and repetitive tasks. Thankfully, innovation and new technology continue to enable more efficient ways of working. Indeed, platforms have been a big help in this regard. However, as we explore in more depth within this year's main IFA DNA report, entitled **IFA DNA: The code for the future advice firm**, Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be the real game-changer here. It is very evident that advice firms are embracing this new technology, particularly in areas such as report writing, meeting transcription and note generation. Respondents to our survey are quite clear – the time savings generated by AI tools are very meaningful.

I hope this special edition gives you a fresh lens on your own working day and, together with the main report, prompts thought on how technology, particularly AI, can help reclaim time for what matters most.

"The conversations with clients, that's where I feel the value is being added. The stuff that really matters is that personal involvement in their lives; someone they know, they trust, they can call on, they're not going to be judged."

"I have that technical speciality around pensions, but the bit I love and the bit I spend a lot of time on is the financial planning bit."

"I've always been about helping people. That's what I enjoy doing. That's why I was fortunate to find an IFA role."

Contents

Methodology

Fidelity commissioned NextWealth to produce this report based on a representative sample of financial advisers from research conducted in June 2025:

- A digital survey of 209 UK financial advisers.
- In-depth qualitative interviews with 10 financial advisers.

The participants were chosen to represent a full range of age and experience from firms large and small.

NEXTWEALTH

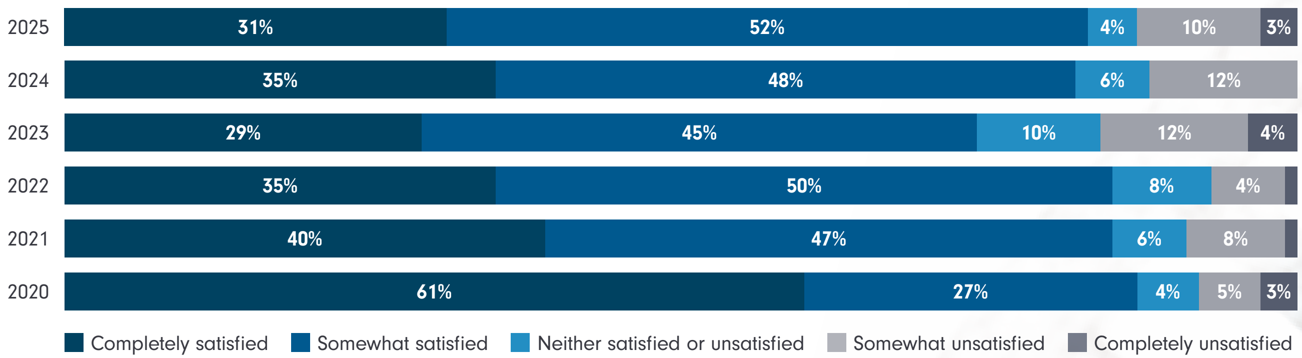
Career satisfaction and the ideal workday

Career satisfaction

Through our IFA DNA series, we have been monitoring the career satisfaction of financial advisers and planners since 2020. In our first survey, satisfaction was high at 61%. Less than a third (31%) now respond so positively. So, at a time when business models are changing and new technology is offering potential time savings, how do firms boost advisers' job satisfaction?

To answer that question, it's helpful to understand the type of individuals who are performing the role and why they're doing it. In other words, what drives advisers as people and, ideally, how would they like to spend their day? Here, we explore this area further.

Career satisfaction



"I want to move clients to a better place. Just to open their eyes and say, hey, this is what we could do."

31%

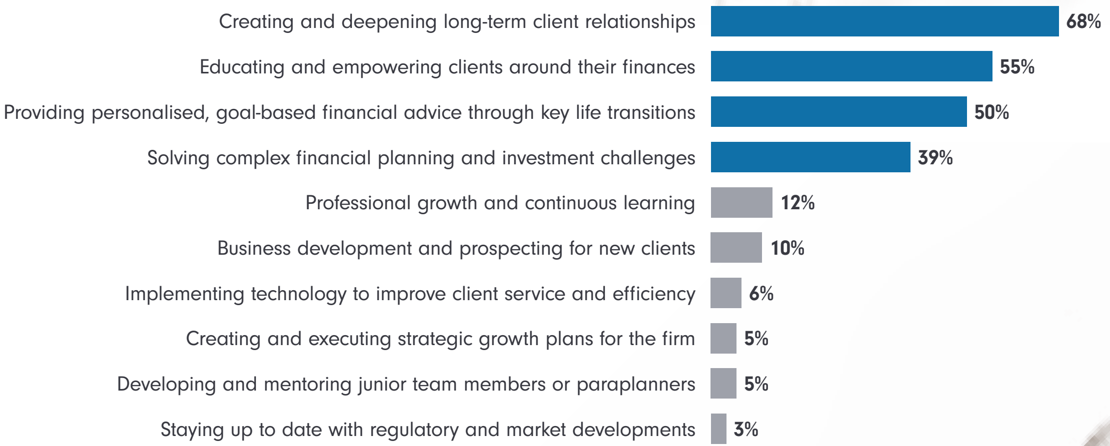
Advice practitioners completely satisfied with their career

So, what aspect of their role gives advisers most fulfilment? It is perhaps no surprise that client-facing activities all score highly. Indeed, 68% of advisers say creating and deepening long-term client relationships gives them most satisfaction while 55% mention educating and empowering clients around their finances. Providing personalised, goal-based advice scores highly too.

Just a third of time is typically spent with clients

However, while developing client relationships is what matters most to advisers, our research shows typically only 33% of their time is actually spent in client meetings. A significant proportion of the working day is spent on writing reports and plans as well as compliance and admin tasks. While advice practitioners enjoy their role, their current workday doesn't match their ideal workday.

Aspects of the role that gives most satisfaction



"I think, unfortunately, client-facing time is only about 20% of my week. I'm overseer of compliance. Plus, what's going on in the investment committee. So, I have other duties which take a lot of time."

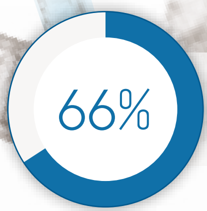
Time spent on activities

The ideal workday

So, how can the workday of advice practitioners be improved? Unsurprisingly, 66% and 55% of respondents to our survey say they would like to spend more time in in-person and remote client meetings respectively. Meanwhile, 72% say a reduced administrative burden would most enhance their workday.

> "If all I have to do is look after my clients, then I will become a very happy person."

Activities that advisers would like to spend more or less time on



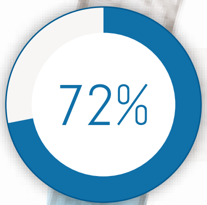
Would like to spend more time in in-person client meetings

Improvements that would enhance the workday

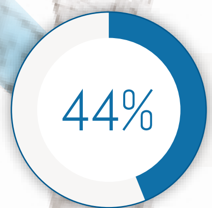
So, how far is an adviser's current workday away from how they would ideally spend their time? The figures reveal a split in opinion – 44% of respondents believe the ideal workday is some way off while 53% say they are already pretty close to, or already have, the ideal workday.

How far advisers are away from their ideal workday

"You can have a two-hour meeting with the client, which is great, and then it's three to four hours to write it up, to get it in the system, to get the reports out, to check the reports."



Believe a reduced administrative burden would most enhance their workday



Advisers some way off from having an ideal workday

In terms of what the ideal workday actually looks like, respondents say just over half their time (51%) would be spent in either in-person or remote client meetings. Conducting research and preparing client reports and plans would account for another 23% of the day.

51% The proportion of time ideally spent in client meetings

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"The more time we can create through technology will give us more time to go right, I can afford two hours out to go and talk to a few potential clients, which in time will generate more work."

Believe AI will enable them to spend more time with clients 40%

How can a better workday balance be achieved?

As revealed in the main report, it appears new technology – and particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI) – has a major part to play here.

Many advisers (19%) say their firm has brought in an AI tool over the last year. These are primarily being used for admin efficiency and document generation and the feedback from the qualitative interviews indicate they are delivering meaningful time savings each week. Looking forward over the next three years, 40% of advisers think AI will allow them to spend more time with clients.

However, it is fair to say that there are some mixed feelings about the adoption of AI – a few respondents did express some worries that the technology may result in the loss of the personal touch and depth of client understanding. So, when implementing new technology, firms need to be mindful of bringing the team along on the journey – emphasising, for example, that AI could be a crucial tool in helping advisers focus more on the human side of the role. In fact, it could help them achieve their ideal workday – more time spent with clients, less time spent on admin.

Download the main IFA DNA report

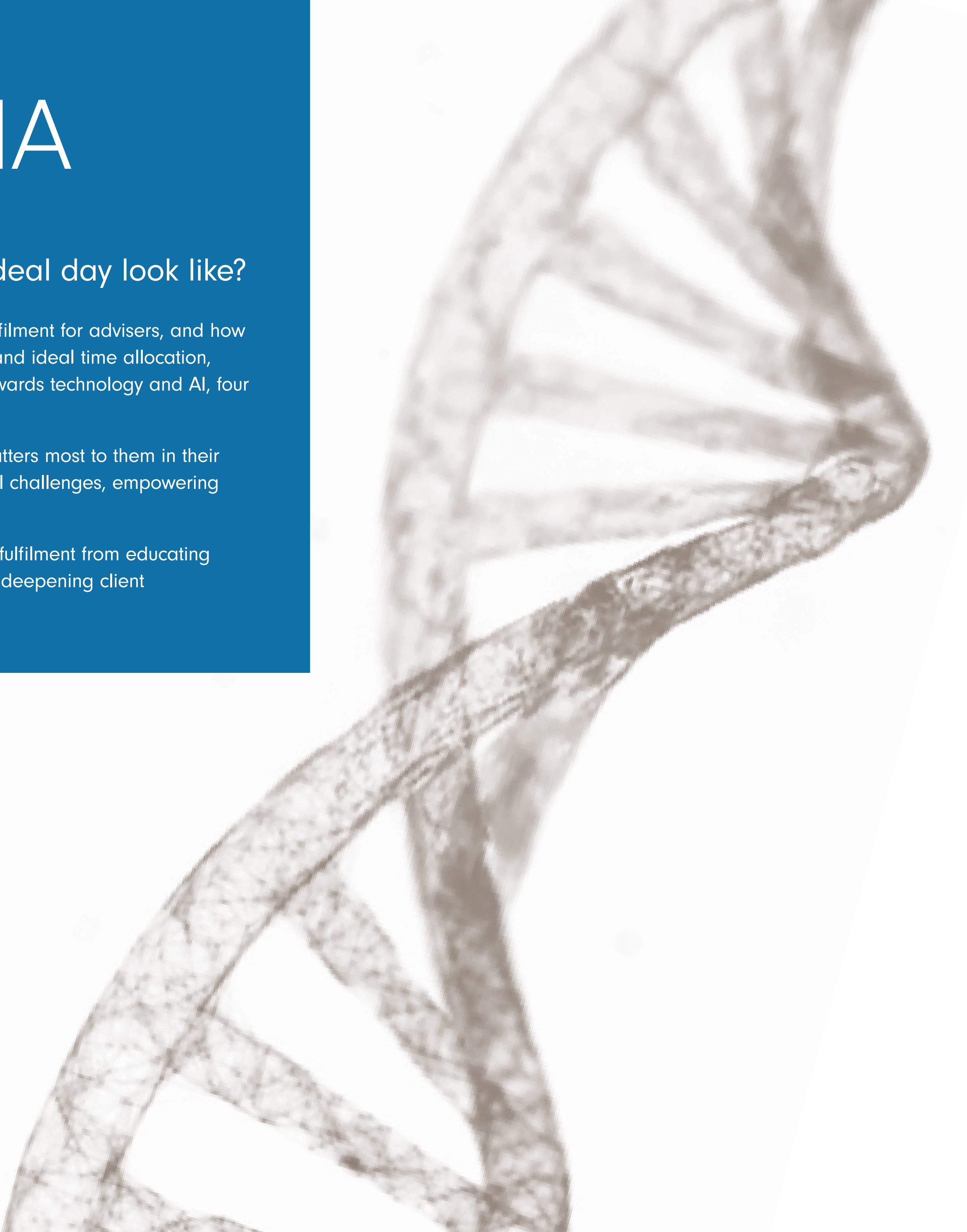
Find your IFA DNA

Which adviser type are you and what does your ideal day look like?

Through our survey and interviews, we set out to understand what truly drives fulfilment for advisers, and how that shapes the way they spend their time. By analysing data points on current and ideal time allocation, cross-referencing them with firm characteristics, business goals, and attitudes towards technology and AI, four clear adviser archetypes emerged.

These are not abstract personas, they are grounded in what advisers told us matters most to them in their work, whether that's building deep client relationships, solving complex technical challenges, empowering clients through education, or optimising strategies and systems.

We also discovered striking differences between the groups: advisers who gain fulfilment from educating clients are currently the closest to their ideal workday, while those who thrive on deepening client relationships are the furthest away.



In the following pages, we explore the four archetypes in detail:

1. **The Relationship-Builder**
2. **The Complex Problem-Solver**
3. **The Educator/Empowerer**
4. **The Tech/Strategy Implementer**

For each, we outline their defining characteristics, what motivates them, and what their ideal workday could look like, offering a blueprint for how firms can design roles, adopt technology, and structure teams to unlock both human fulfilment and business performance.

1 The Relationship-Builder

Warm, grounded, and people-first, this adviser draws their energy from real human connections. They thrive on long-term relationships and the privilege of walking alongside clients through major life transitions, from retiring to downsizing to planning a legacy.

What lights them up are the moments of trust – when a client opens up about their fears, their family, or their dreams. They take pride in creating calm from chaos, and find meaning in giving clients peace of mind and a sense of control, even when the world feels uncertain.

Unfortunately, the responses from our research show these advisers are the least likely to be satisfied with their careers. The burden of regulatory compliance and client expectations around value adds pressure to the role, especially when it squeezes the time they want to spend truly listening.

Looking ahead, they're excited by the increasing focus on wellbeing and values-based planning, but wary of losing the human touch to templated tech solutions. They want tools that enhance – not replace – the conversations that matter, and free up time and capacity to do the 'nice to have' touches. Their biggest hope? That advice keeps evolving in a way that honours the human stories at its heart.

"I can't do 10 meetings a day – I want to give people time. That's the joy of the job."

"That's what it's about and that's what stands us out from the next guy down the road because at the end of day, we've all got the same box of tricks. What stands us out is what the client feels about you as a person and vice versa."

THE IDEAL DAY:

Relationship-Builder

8:30am

The day starts with a bit of breathing room; not rushing into a wall of meetings. There's time for a quiet check of emails, scanning through the AI-generated prep notes for the morning's client calls. It's not perfect, but it saves 45 minutes of digging through previous reports and portfolios.

9:30am

Next is a familiar kind of meeting, the kind that energises them. A long-term client is adjusting to life after unexpectedly losing her partner. She's anxious and overwhelmed, unsure what to do next. This isn't just about money. The adviser slows the pace, listens carefully, and helps her tackle one manageable action. It's in these moments they feel most useful.

12:10pm

Afterwards, there's a short burst of admin: a compliance check, a task update in the CRM, maybe a quick review of AI-drafted meeting notes before sending them on. Not their favourite part of the job, but tolerable when it's not consuming too much of the day.

1:15pm

Lunchtime might include a mentoring catch-up with a younger colleague, or a 20-minute call to a client they haven't heard from in a while, to check in, in a way that AI can't replicate.

2:00pm

The afternoon involves a mix: a planning session with the team, some admin that hasn't yet been automated, and maybe refining the wording of a sensitive message that AI drafted but didn't quite get the tone right. There's a clear sense of what's theirs to do, and what tech can handle.

5:30pm

They finish the day with energy left in the tank. Not because it was perfect, but because there was space to be human. AI helped free up the time, but the emotional lift came from doing what they do best: being present, being trusted, and making someone's day a bit lighter.

2 The Complex Problem-Solver

Driven by intellectual challenge and strategic thinking, this planner finds purpose in untangling the knottiest client situations. They are at their best when deep in the detail – engineering tax-efficient outcomes, or solving the multi-dimensional puzzles that wealth can create. What energises them is not just the plan itself, but the elegance of how it fits together.

This adviser thrives on nuance, control, and being seen as a source of authority: the person clients (and peers) turn to when something is tricky, technical or unclear. They take real pride in doing the hard work behind the scenes, surfacing opportunities others might miss.

This persona's specific frustration is the sense that much of the industry is dumbing down, drifting toward standardised, simplified, commoditised advice. They worry about becoming less relevant in a market that over-prioritises efficiency over nuance. Tech has its place, but only if it frees up time for the parts of the role they want to do more of, not reduce their value. In fact, these advisers are the least satisfied with the tech they use, although they are the most likely to anticipate AI will have a positive impact on their role.

Looking ahead, their hope is that complexity will be respected, not flattened, and that their skillset won't just survive but thrive in an AI-supported world that still needs human oversight, rigour and creative thinking.

"It's great working with the paraplanners in our team to create solutions to complex problems. The bit that we don't get too much enjoyment out of is the really manual processes."

"I wanted to get as much of that technical knowledge behind me as I could, which I feel has worked well for me. Getting Chartered and doing the Advanced Diploma; that's been better for dealing with real-life examples, testing specific scenarios, than the earlier exams."

THE IDEAL DAY:

Complex Problem-Solver

8:00am

Their ideal day starts early, with time blocked out for deep work. No back-to-back meetings, no distractions – just a clear run at a client case that genuinely needs some thought. Maybe it's a business owner with three pensions, a deferred DB scheme, and a £1 million capital gain to deal with. There's a thrill in breaking it down, testing options, modelling outcomes, balancing risk and opportunity.

12:00pm

Midday brings a couple of shorter, punchier meetings, maybe a client who needs reassurance that the complex plan is still on track, or a colleague who wants a second opinion on a convoluted case. This persona loves being seen as the technical go-to, the person who'll spot what others miss.

3:00pm

There's still admin, of course, checking notes, reviewing outputs, refining letters, but they'll happily let AI help with formatting, drafting, even some early modelling. What they want control over is the thinking – the judgment calls, the nuance. Not the stuff a robot can spit out.

5:20pm

They wrap up the day with a sense of quiet satisfaction. The reward isn't always visible, sometimes it's just the knowledge that a smart structure is humming in the background, saving the client money, time or stress.

3 The Educator/Empowerer

This planner lights up when they see a client 'get it'. They are driven by the belief that financial advice isn't just about giving answers, it's about building understanding. They see their role as a guide, not a guru. The win isn't the cleverest strategy, it's when a client who's always felt intimidated by money finally says, 'I feel in control'.

Clarity, simplicity and emotional confidence are what they work toward. For this type of adviser, demystifying complex ideas, using metaphors, visual aids, even humour, is part of the craft. They find purpose in seeing clients move from confusion to confidence, especially those who have been marginalised or excluded from financial conversations in the past. It's not about wealth level; it's about mindset. They are the second-most likely of the four personas to be satisfied with their careers.

The challenge? Patience. Not every client wants to learn. Some just want a solution, not a seminar. And this persona sometimes wrestles with how to measure the impact of their softer, coaching-led approach in a world still wired for transactions and ROI.

Looking forward, they're hopeful that advice continues to embrace emotional literacy and education, and that technology can be a teaching tool, not a crutch. They want AI to support personalised learning, not just faster transactions.

"I want them to feel like they've understood it, rather than just trusted me. That they've gone away knowing more."

"We're able to help people, aren't we? Most people who come to us really struggle with understanding money. There's a lot they don't know and it's just being in a position where we can help them, add value to them and we can make them feel better."

THE IDEAL DAY:

Educator/Empowerer

8:30am

This planner's ideal day starts with intention. Not just clearing emails, but scanning for moments that matter: clients who've asked big questions, or who left the last meeting needing clarity. AI-generated prep helps jog the memory, but they'll always add their own notes and context, because tone and timing matter.

10:00am

The morning includes a standout client session, a stressed-out factory manager who learned he could retire and rekindle a long-lost passion for art. That emotional shift – from self-doubt to self-belief – is what drives them.

11:45am

After the meeting, they jot a few reflections. What was the turning point? What helped him see the path clearly? These are regularly turned into LinkedIn posts, not to talk about themselves, but to share what others might find helpful.

1:00pm

Lunchtime is flexible – maybe a walk, maybe a quick call with a colleague about a client communication challenge. This persona often helps shape internal best practice too; how to explain drawdown, or how to deliver bad news without undermining confidence.

2:00pm

Afternoons are admin-heavy but purposeful. It might be following up with a tailored explainer, a screen-recorded video walking through a projection, or rewriting the auto-drafted meeting summary into something that sounds human. AI helps with structure and efficiency, but they'll never delegate empathy.

5:30pm

They close the day with a sense of connection: to clients, to their profession, and to a broader audience of people trying to make good financial decisions. Whether through one conversation or one LinkedIn post, they've helped someone move from fog to focus, and that's what matters.

4 The Tech/Strategy Implementer

Always building, always refining, this adviser thrives on systems, scale and strategy. Satisfaction doesn't just come from a great client meeting; it comes from seeing the whole machine running smoothly. They're at their best when solving for process: finding better ways to deliver advice, use data, or align the team around a common strategy.

With their extra management responsibilities, they no longer have a full-time advice role – not because they fell out of love with clients, but because they saw a bigger puzzle to solve. In fact, our research shows they are the most likely to be satisfied with their careers.

This persona is energised by design: of processes and propositions. They're rarely satisfied with the status quo and are constantly scanning for ways to do things better, whether that's rethinking service tiers, improving onboarding journeys, or integrating tech like AI to reduce cognitive load across the team. These advisers are the most satisfied with the tech they use.

Balancing client work with running an advice business is a difficult juggling act. They're hopeful that technology, especially AI, can free up time for more proactive projects to move the business forward. Their legacy is about building something that lasts: scalable, repeatable, client-focused and constantly improving.

"I still get a buzz from helping people. But I realised I could help more if I built something that helped the team do that at scale."

"I hate writing meeting notes. AI takes away probably two-thirds of that work, which is great. You still need to spend a decent chunk of time refining them, tidying and removing duplication. It also does stuff like drafting follow up emails. I think that's saved probably say five hours a week."

THE IDEAL DAY:

Tech/Strategy Implementer

8:00am

A good day starts early, before the inbox gets noisy. They review key metrics from their advice business: pipeline stages, client journey bottlenecks and recent Net Promotor Scores. They've got dashboards for it all. But they're not just watching – they are looking for patterns, friction points, opportunities to tune the engine.

10:30am

Mid-morning might bring a workshop with the team – road-testing a new onboarding journey or refining how an AI tool is integrated into suitability report creation. But as they always remind the team, technology can be brilliant if it takes things off your plate, but only if you've done the hard yards to make your proposition clear first.

1:00pm

This afternoon brings something different – they are presenting at a business development session, following an invite to speak at a session for graduates. These speaking opportunities are gold – they position the firm as thought leaders while opening doors to new client segments.

3:30pm

There's still admin – compliance queries, tech vendor calls, maybe a budget meeting – but they've built systems to streamline it. What frustrates them most is when the team doesn't use the systems properly, or when tools are chosen without thinking about long-term integration.

5:30pm

The day ends promptly for junior football coaching. This isn't just work-life balance – it's proof that their systems work. Over time, the incremental changes and relentless focus on process creates the scale, consistency and freedom to lead a business they're genuinely proud of.

So, the conclusion from our research is that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' advice practitioner. There are four distinct profiles – each with different motivations, preferred tasks and definitions of professional fulfilment. From those energised by complex technical challenges to others who thrive on relationship-building and business development, these profiles reveal that successful firms will need to think differently about role design and career paths as they move forward.

Summary

This report confirms what many in the profession have long felt: while advisers find deep fulfilment in helping clients, too much of the workday is consumed by admin, reporting and compliance. Redressing that balance will require more than a single lever. It calls for rethinking roles, reclaiming client time, harnessing technology wisely and aligning work with what brings genuine professional satisfaction.

Technology, including AI, is one part of this picture. Around one in five advisers say their firm has introduced an AI tool over the course of the last year. Some describe it as a 'massive leap forward', while others remain unsure or even sceptical about its impact. For many, AI's role in advice is still to be defined, and its success will depend on how well it complements, rather than replaces, the human elements of the role.

In the future, AI will undoubtedly support more and more tasks, improving efficiencies even further. Indeed, at Fidelity, we believe AI can transform the way we do business and that it will bring about significant enhancements across multiple business processes – all of which will help advice firms improve productivity and efficiency. In fact, advisers are already reaping the benefits of our investment in AI through quicker and more accurate processes.

Importantly, AI is not the only change on the horizon. Some advice firms are also exploring how to scale their service, reach different types of clients, and experimenting with new business models. These shifts make it essential to understand how the adviser role itself is evolving, and how to design it in ways that maximise both business performance and personal fulfilment.

Catch-up on all the latest insights and opinion

IFA DNA is just one way in which we engage with practitioners. Our website contains lots of research on issues affecting advisers, technical content on areas such as pensions and tax, and insights to help firms navigate business challenges and build profitable practices. There's also content that gives tips on how to enhance client relationships and advice on helping clients with their financial wellness.

More insights and adviser research

Adviser Solutions

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