estate guru

Making Sense of AI

2026 Quarter Two Report

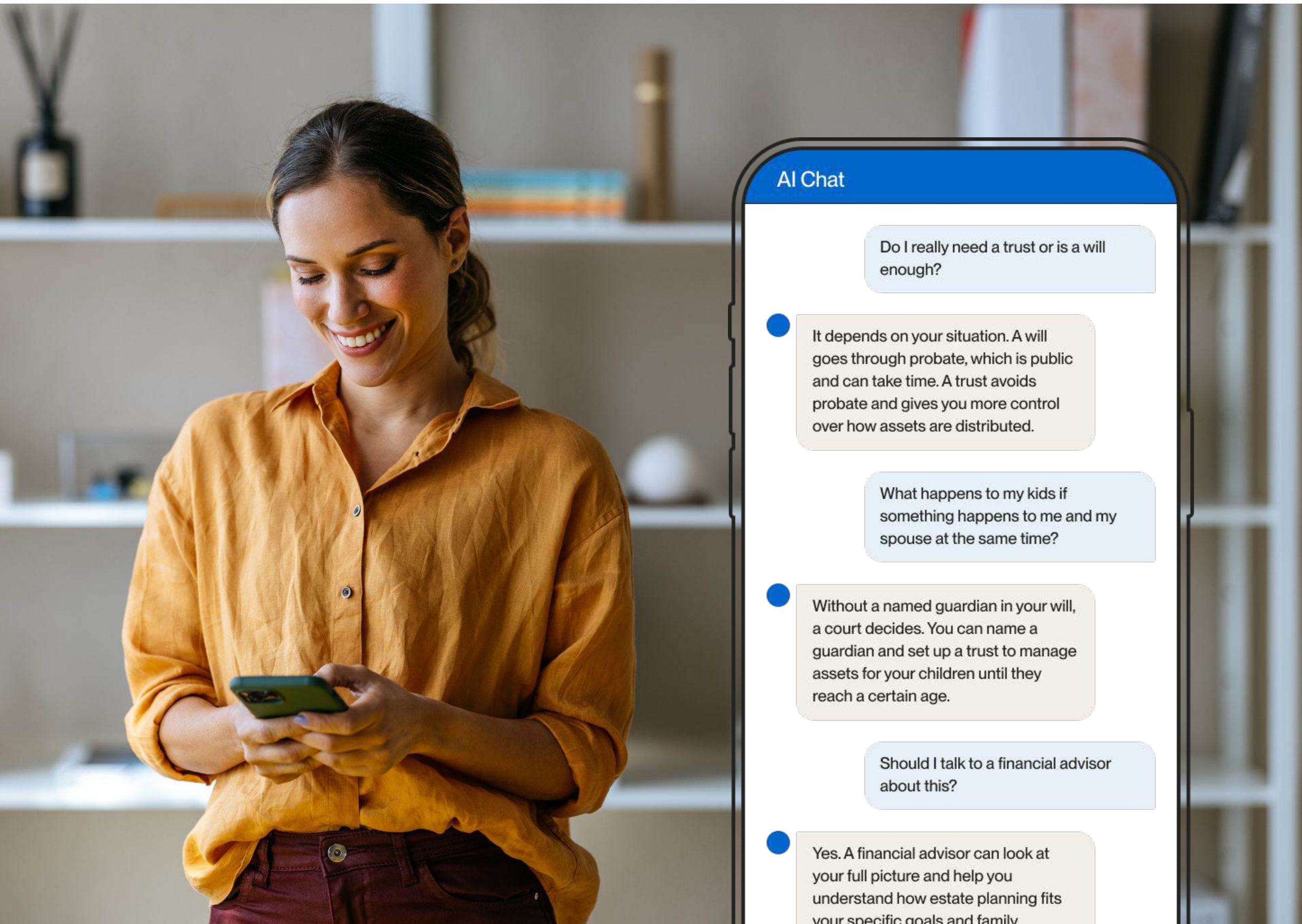


Table of contents

Letter from our team

Last quarter, we spent time talking about technology, advisory work, and estate planning. Those conversations are at the intersection of our work and our advisors' work.

This quarter, we kept noticing the same pattern. There is no shortage of discussion about AI. The research is extensive, some of the predictions are quite bold, and opinions on AI are divisive. But the thing that's really missing is the clear, honest picture of what adoption actually looks like for an advisor running a practice, serving real clients, and trying to make good technology decisions that serve them for a long time. We wanted to make sense of that.

As an estate planning platform company, we live at the intersection of financial services and estate planning. We live in the intersection of business, people, finances, and legal operations. We believe that technology is impactful for providing opportunities and reaching new audiences, but care and humanity should lead those conversations.

What you will find here is not a one-sided or biased representation of AI or an endorsement for always or never using it. It's an honest multi-view perspective at where AI earns its place, where it creates risk, and why advisor care is irreplaceable. We want to hear your success stories after reading this report.

After reading, you are welcome to reach out to our team to share what you carried into practice, how your client conversations changed, and the judgment calls you and your firm are now using when thinking about AI and estate planning in financial advisory services.

From our team to yours,
– The EG team

Key findings

Knowing isn’t doing: The AI adoption gap

99% of advisors believe AI will play a significant role in the future of financial advice. Only 6% currently use AI for financial plan creation. The gap between those two numbers is where this report lives.

Clients are already there

One in 3 U.S. consumers is using AI to learn about finances. Two out of 3 Americans have used AI for financial advice. Roughly 85% of those who received AI financial advice acted on the recommendation. Clients are not waiting for advisors to introduce them to AI. They are arriving at planning conversations having already consulted it.

They still want a human in the room

About 61% of Americans want AI working alongside their advisor, not instead of one. Another 69% believe human advice is more powerful than any algorithm. Then, 76% say technology can provide information but not judgment or trust. Clients know the difference between information and advice. They want both, with a human leading.

The operational opportunity is real but requires work

Proximately 80% of advisors are already using AI to automate time-consuming tasks, reclaiming 65 to 87 hours per year. Firms with governance in place are 4 times more likely to see positive returns. About half of firms still lack basic data processes. Two thirds report only modest returns. The tools are ready. The foundation underneath them often is not.

The consequences of misuse are documented

Only 19% of humans can accurately identify AI-generated writing. About 42.1% of compliance professionals say their biggest concern is supervisory oversight of AI outputs.

The most important skill going forward is human

53% of advisors name emotional intelligence as the top skill for the profession going forward. With 69% believing their role will remain essential over the next decade.

Section 01

The state of AI

Overview

Industries know that AI isn't going away. What they are still working out is what adoption looks like and what it requires. The current state includes the last few years being used for research and vetting AI and technology. Advisory firms have been exploring, testing, and waiting to see what others are doing with AI. The research currently suggests that more firms are slowly moving away from the vetting and research stage into early adoption of AI tools. We do offer a clear picture of where the industry currently stands, but we cannot predict what may happen next with AI and technology.

Section 01 Objective

We offer advisors a structure for explaining and processing how AI is becoming an asset in business.

Section 01

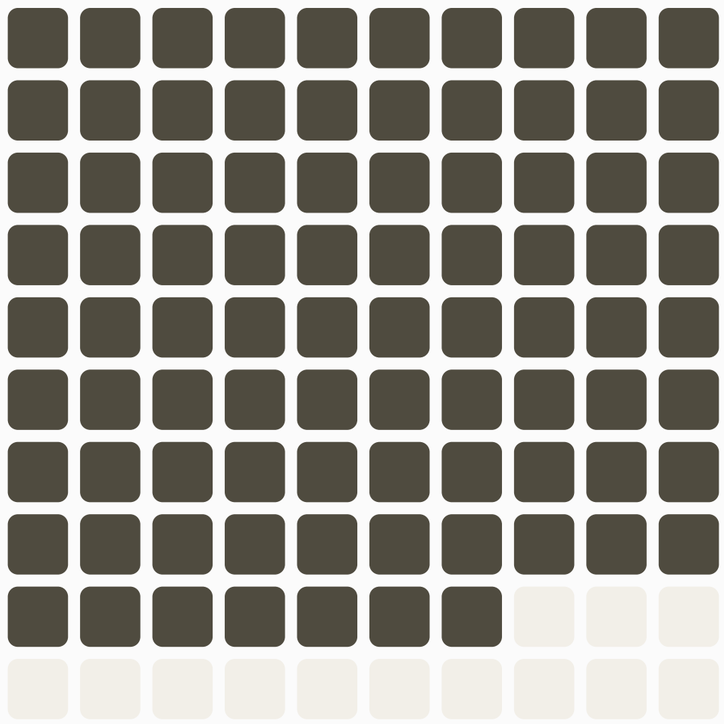
Introduction

AI seems to generate a lot of office conversations. Advisors may hear about how their clients may want it in their advisement package. They may hear how others in the industry are adopting or not adopting AI strategies. They may see new internal policies or new tools that their company leaders are now providing and training on. It may be on the conference agenda list, a technology newsletter, or strategy meetings.

AI talk remains a constant, but part of the reason it's a constant discussion is that we are still trying to make sense of what it does and its limits. In other words, we talk to try to make sense of the uncertainty of what it can or cannot do.

Advisors and their firms are not alone in feeling this way. It's a difficult process, and not always easily translatable from research to practice. In fact, 87% of financial advisors are currently actively looking for ways to incorporate AI into their operations. They're doing the work.

But there are several hold ups. Questions about determining what's real and what's not real, regarding AI capabilities. Concerns about compliance, accountability, and what happens when something goes wrong. Pauses about whether the technology is ready, whether the practice is ready, and whether the risk is worth it. All of these need attention, yet remain as a gap. We chose to dive headfirst into the puzzle and offer practical solutions. This section makes sense of the noise and offers how to appropriately adopt AI.



87% of financial advisors are learning to bring AI into daily work

Section 01

Industry reactions

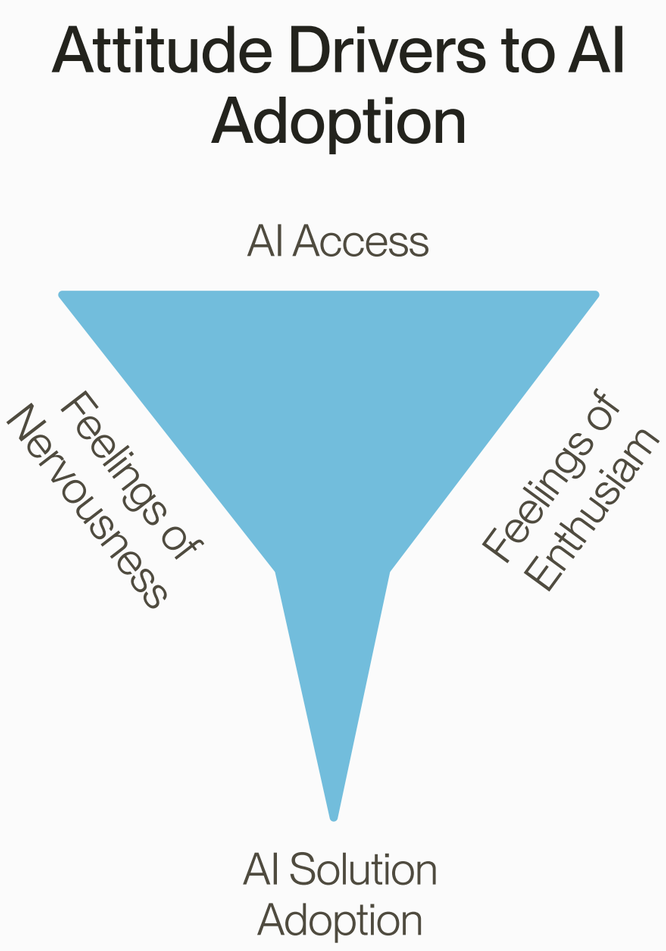
It feels like AI discussions dissolve into confusion, or conflicting or strong views. Individuals' views can feel black and white, and also gray, when it comes to strategy. For example, nearly half of all surveyed financial advisors are holding back from AI adoption in 2025.

Imagine sitting in a meeting hearing several types of views on AI in practice. Some see it as an open door with lots of new opportunities. They may want to explain how they see AI as a way to serve more clients, move through tasks faster, or compete with larger firms that may have more resources. What they may actually be communicating here is that they see AI as a way to build the practice without adding new people.

Seeing a new way to operate may be exciting and could open doors. "AI can do this for us" is usually said, but little proof of how to do this is discussed. There is a need for balance. The understanding that there are great opportunities, but some healthy curiosity to understand how AI works and how it applies to business.

This enthusiasm comes with risk. If AI can build and create new opportunities, what does that look like? This question tends to be pushed to the side because the assumption is that the process is too technical to understand, or the belief that AI will just handle it.

There are several cautions involved in this process. About 72% of advisory firms know that its technology is outdated, which impacts access and infrastructure. AI has been one of the most common compliance concerns. Another survey notes that 60% of firms are worried about regulatory concerns. These professionals want to make sure that the AI rules are in line with the landscape.



The industry is now at a phase where the tools are available and accessible. And although it may appear that these differing opinions may lead to contrasting results, a solution sits somewhere in the middle. This report cannot reach every specific case, but we can offer practical guidelines when advisors, firms, and technology are willing to work together toward the same goal, a balance between technology and human services.

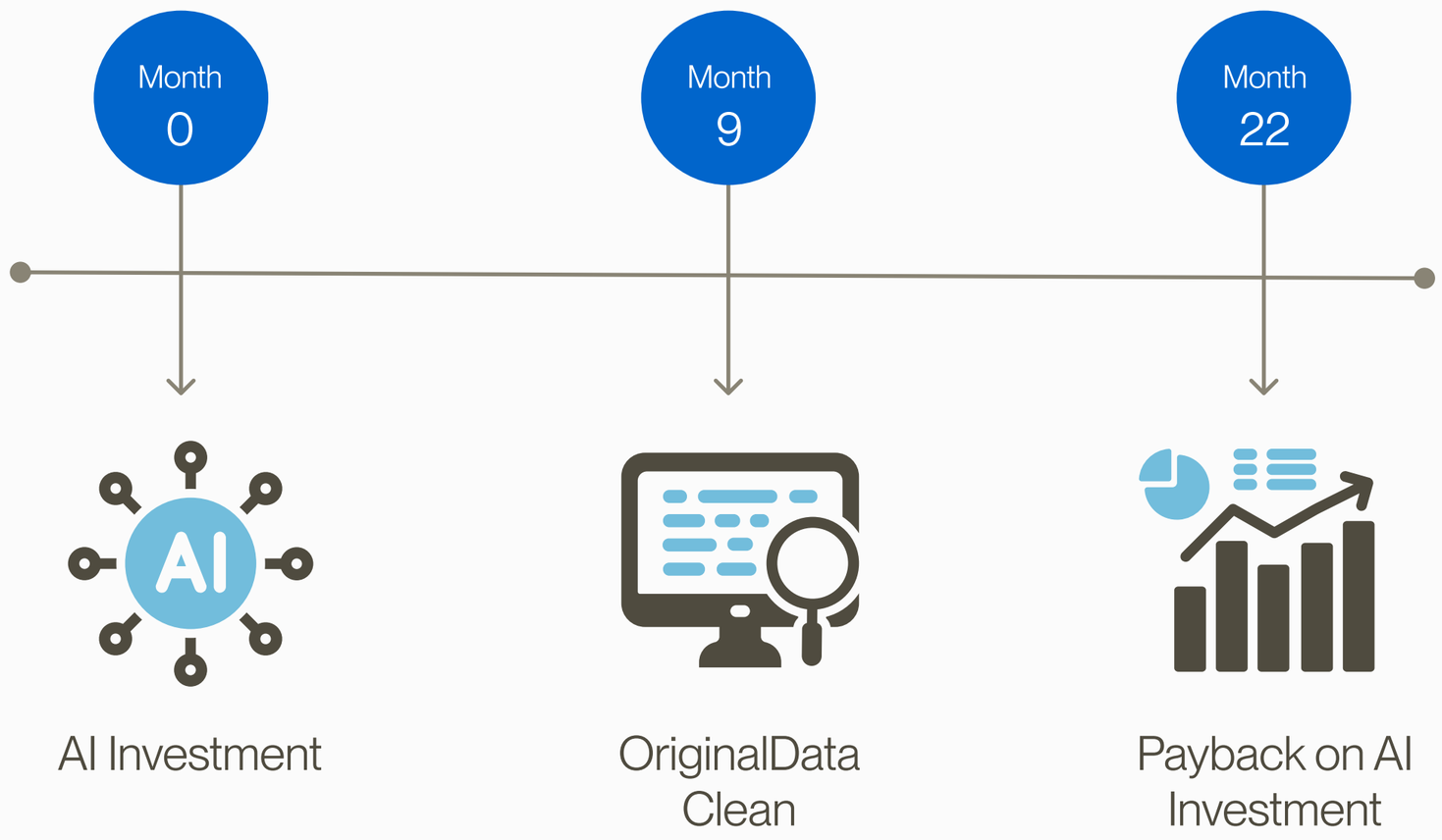
Section 01

The gap between promise and practice

AI can overpromise. If AI is pitched as the perfect tool to achieve a specific outcome, maybe it is worth some investigation, and it may take some time to adopt. AI is machine learning. It learns as more information is provided.

Because AI needs information, someone needs to provide the source information. Advisors and their teams are the ones directing and providing information. That process will not produce instant results, as originally predicted. Financial advisors may find incremental improvement over time. This pattern repeats itself in the research.

In fact, about 2/3 of organizations currently using AI suggest that they are seeing modest returns on their investments. Others note that the average payback period on AI projects is roughly 22 months. When the gap between what AI can be used for, what it promises and delivers, and what businesses understand these elements and the time and energy needed to understand, there is less disappointment.

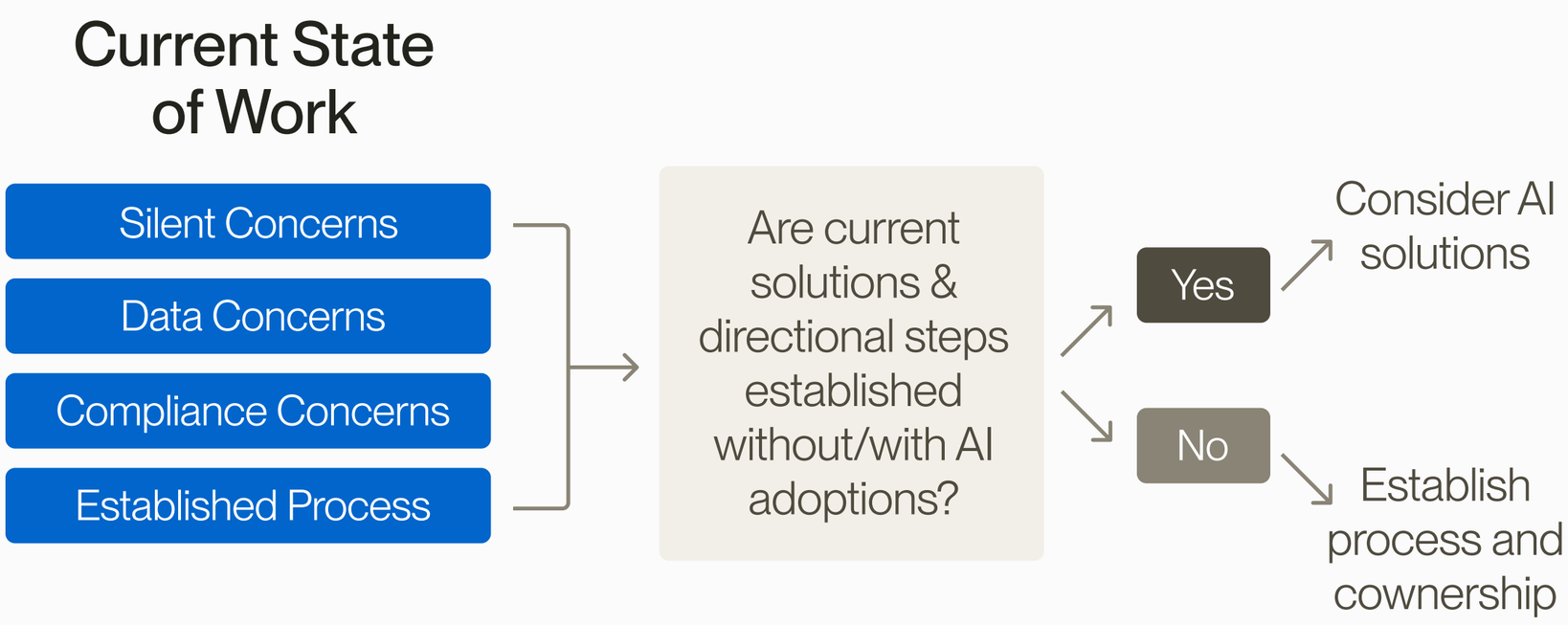


Section 01

Ask questions before adopting

The research offers areas to consider before adopting any AI, but doesn't necessarily provide helpful questions to ask oneself and then AI vendors. But these questions are worth sitting with to make sure adoption has a place and reason for existing in practice.

It's common to hear about an AI solution for a problem that a business has never had before, but may want to achieve. For that reason, the AI solution sounds compelling. But it's worth asking honestly: **Do we want this AI system because it genuinely impacts my clients or because that's where we want to go?** And do I have a way to achieve that goal without it?



1. **Start with the client.** What problem is this actually solving for the people I serve?
2. **Ask about the data.** Is the information feeding this tool accurate, organized, and current? Are there areas of data we want to explore that aren't already included?
3. **Then compliance.** What happens if something goes wrong? Who is responsible for the output? How is client data being protected?
4. **Consider the process.** Could we start small with adopting AI? Are there repetitive, non-client-facing tasks that are slowing business down? Is the time and cost of adoption worth what this tool will actually deliver?

Section 01

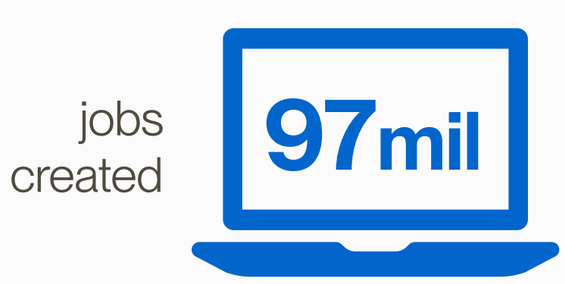
A fear developed as AI solutions are adopted

Others in the profession have landed on a different reaction entirely. In their eyes, AI is seen as a replacement for people. Outside of financial advisory, a number of large companies, like Amazon, Meta, Google, and Microsoft, are collectively planning to spend $650 billion on AI this upcoming year, as well as report laying off hundreds of employees. Reading these headlines can feel extremely unsettling.

AI is now contributing to shaping the market. AI is projected to contribute to $15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030. It was also projected that 85 million jobs would be eliminated, but 97 million new jobs would be created. That's a net gain of 12 million jobs.

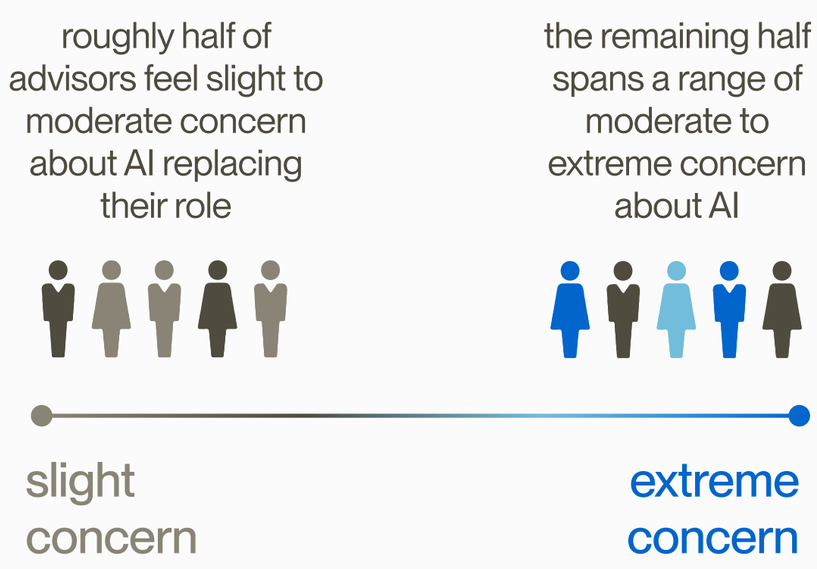
AI $15.7 trillion budget

Net Gain 12 Million Jobs by 2030



Specifically looking at the financial industry, the primary concerns raised were about how AI might replace financial jobs. Other research suggests that roughly one in three U.S. consumers is using AI to learn about finances, and almost half have or considered using AI tools to manage their personal finances. Many of these users are younger generations, and over 96% of the sample report having positive experiences. Another 77% of users say they use AI for finances at least weekly.

Spectrum of Concern



Hearing how companies and individuals are prioritizing AI can propel fear. Nearly half of advisors feel at least moderate concern about AI replacing aspects of their role. What the research actually shows is more specific than replacement. AI is primarily being used for automation. The repetitive, time-consuming grunt work tasks. Some of the most cited examples are note-taking and sharing notes post-meeting. Making CRM updates after a sales meeting. Drafting routine follow-up emails. Setting portfolio monitoring alerts. All of these take time and energy, but none require an advisor to be actively involved.

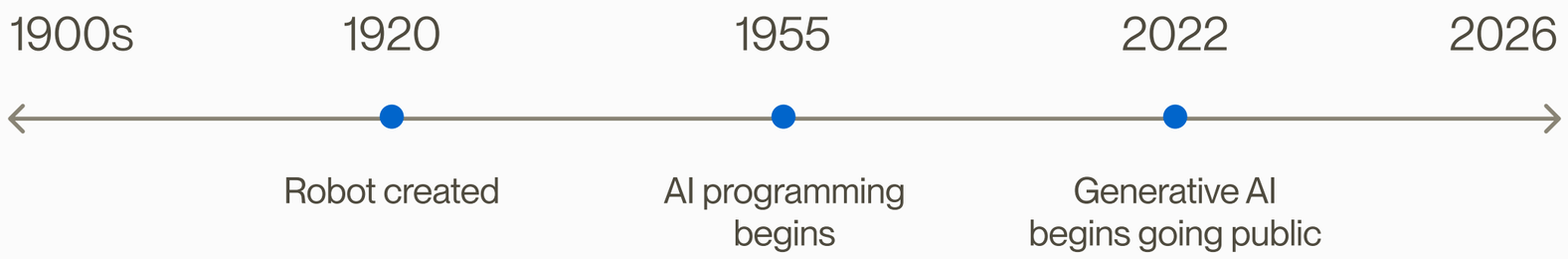
Section 01

AI origins

Although AI is much more discussed today, it's not a new thing. In the early 1900s, lots of media, primarily books and movies, questioned whether there were ways to create artificial humans. Scientists started to explore possibilities, and in the late 1920s, a robot in Japan was created. Then, one of the early tracers of AI, in 1950, asked if machines could mimic human intelligence. In 1955, John McCarthy founded AI and created a programming language that was crucial to AI development. The 1990s offered new opportunities as the Internet began growing.

AI has been used for a number of purposes, whether realized or not. Some of the most common are web searches, online ads, spam filtering, image recognition, spellcheck, streaming recommendations, online shopping, weather forecasting, navigation and traffic routing, and smartphone assistants like Alexa or Siri that use speech recognition and command handling.

AI Timeline



When AI may feel foreign or feel like it appeared out of nowhere, it's important to remember that most people have been using forms of AI tools for years without calling them that. This technology is built on layers of years and data.

A notable 85% of advisors consider AI a help in the new wave of adoption. In 2025, only 9% of advisors didn't use AI at all, and 8% saw it as a potential threat to their livelihood compared to the 21% who felt threatened by it just a year prior. This means the industry, although talking about different reasons to adopt or not adopt, feels they are at a place where they are comfortable enough to know what to include in their stack.

Section 01

AI origins, cont.

Even though the technology has existed for decades, the difference now is the speed of creation. The pace of development escalated exponentially beginning in 2022 and 2023. AI was now interactive in a new public light. For a long time, it worked behind the scenes in search algorithms, spam filters, and content recommendations. It existed, just never considered as AI. Individuals could now ask AI all sorts of questions, ask for documentation summaries, or generate images. The realization that AI could do more than what it quietly did for a long time, and that it was now visible to everyone, shaped the reactions we are seeing today.

When things started picking up in 2023, AI in financial services was experimental. Firms were exploring, researching, and piloting. The focus was primarily on exploring the possibilities of AI. By 2026, the conversation has shifted to practice. More than half of RIA firms are already using AI in some form. Another 82% have formal AI policies in place, up from 47% just two years earlier. Again, conversations have gone from asking if AI is worth exploring to how it works well.

9%

In 2025, only 9% don't use AI. Another 8% see it as a threat to livelihood compared to the 21% from the previous year

Section 01

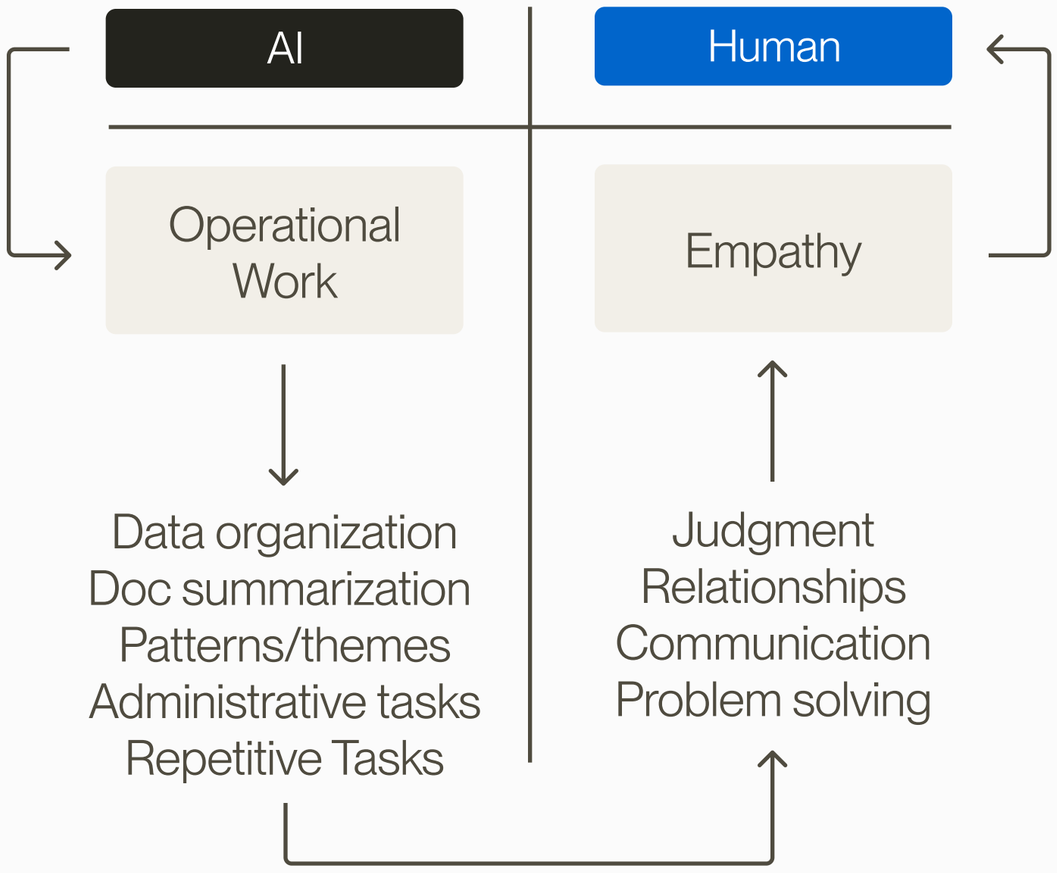
Two levels of work in an advisor's practice

In the financial advisor's role, work has always been of two types. Although there is fear about how AI works in business, it's clarifying the two tiers of work and helping advisors establish priorities in their roles.

The first tier is operational work. This is the work of organizing information, processing data, summarizing documents, identifying patterns, scheduling, drafting routine communications, and managing the administrative infrastructure of a practice. These tasks could be characterized as logistical, routine, and grunt-style work that doesn't necessarily have a payoff, but is still necessary to keep the business running. This first tier can feel time-consuming and tedious. And frankly, most have already said to themselves at one point, "I wish a computer could just do this for me." AI works great at an operational level. It works day in and out. It loves repetitive patterns, finding the one small data error, or routing calls and taking transcripts. Many of these small things that feel so time-consuming, AI can do at a much faster and more consistent speed.

The second tier of work is designed for advisors. This type of work relies on the operational level to reach this type of work. It needs someone to set times, create schedules, and access data. But this tier is about relationships. It's about making sense of the themes and data the operations level generated. It's about showing accountability for work done and producing results. Working with clients, addressing their needs, making judgment calls to create tailored solutions for that family. It's about building trust through performing, answering, and listening. But most importantly, it's about showing empathy, providing perspective-taking (stepping into the shoes of clients), and thinking into caring for clients and their families.

Two levels of work in an advisor's practice, cont.



The balance between tier 1 and 2 of work may look like organizing a routine email to send to clients to remind them to schedule a time to review their portfolio. Creating a link that takes them to a time to schedule a meeting. Then that meeting time was automated to the advisor's calendar. The system looks at the client and uses analytics to understand their current financial situation. Tier one is complete at this point.

Tier 2, the human relationship, begins. The client meets with the advisor. They review patterns, review the portfolio, and then address other concerns. The advisor recognizes social cues when certain topics are addressed, especially estate planning. Maybe their children have needs unique to most families. Maybe they're worried about taxes and making financial goals that benefit those they love. Maybe they aren't sure how to ask to be a trustee, if something were to happen. The advisor then asks questions, gathers information, listens, and offers support with solutions. This role is unique and rewarding. Computers read data, not people. But real solutions come from relationships, understanding, intentionality, and empathy.

Both areas of work matter and connect. But with AI, there's now less guessing who does what tier of work.

However, there is a word of caution here. AI can be seen as a way to remove items from advisors' work plates. That is not necessarily the case. These two levels of work go together, not independently. Computers do not have the same accountability status as humans. They still need direction, oversight, and management. Humans still need to oversee AI's work because it contributes to relationships, empathy, and trust. They can do this by testing AI services before using them with clients, evaluating the work AI does, and revisiting processes as needed.

Section 01

Two levels of work in an advisor's practice, cont.

The advisor's value is high. With the support of AI's role in the operational level, they're able to focus on more important areas of work that set them apart from AI. Their work becomes more visible and relationship-focused.

These outcomes reflect the general consensus of advisors. Nearly 7 in 10 advisors believe their role will remain essential over the next decade. They recognize the importance of their relationships, finding solutions that meet client needs, and showing empathy through perspective-taking and listening. Their decisions matter, and they know they can see a payoff with a more focused relationship-approach.

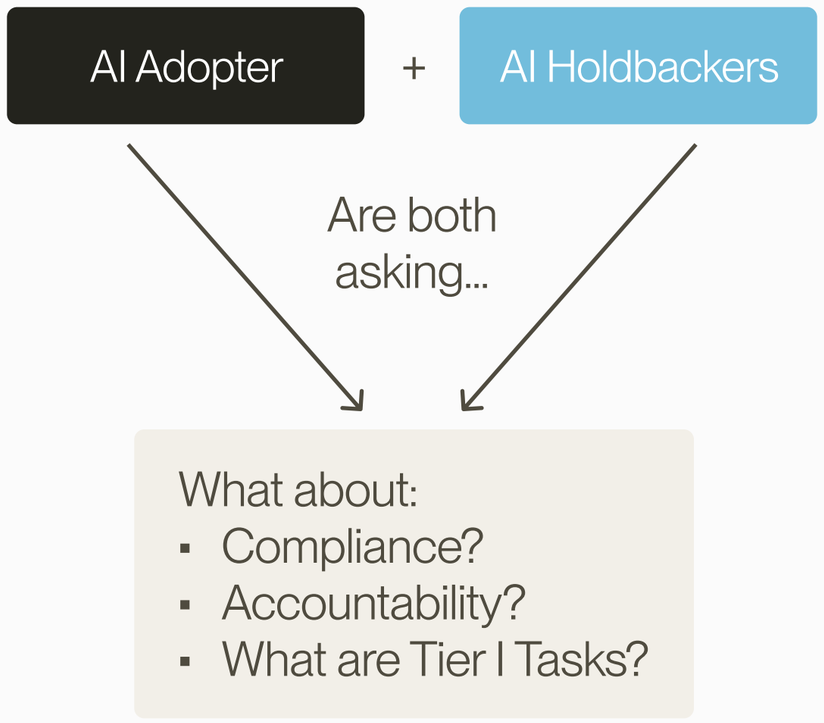
Section 01

Why the split in the industry makes sense

Although advisors are optimistic about their future in the industry, the way they are choosing to use AI for operational tasks varies. About half of the advisors are moving forward and adopting AI; the other half have not.

The research says that the half of advisors who are adopting AI are finding benefits from AI's ability to handle operational tasks. Meeting summaries that used to take thirty minutes now take two. CRM records that used to fall through the cracks are being updated in real time. Research workflows that consumed hours are being compressed into minutes. These are the administrative and reversible tasks where the cost of an AI error is low, and the benefit of AI efficiency, once built and used correctly, has the potential to be immediate. The advisors adopting these tools are not handing over their judgment. They are reclaiming the time they need to focus on work that requires their careful attention.

The advisors who haven't adopted AI are watching how their peers are using it and learning from them. Most of them are already comfortable using AI in their personal lives. The hesitation is professional. They are cautious about the effects of AI for compliance exposure, accountability, and the question of what happens when something goes wrong. That's a legitimate reason to pause.



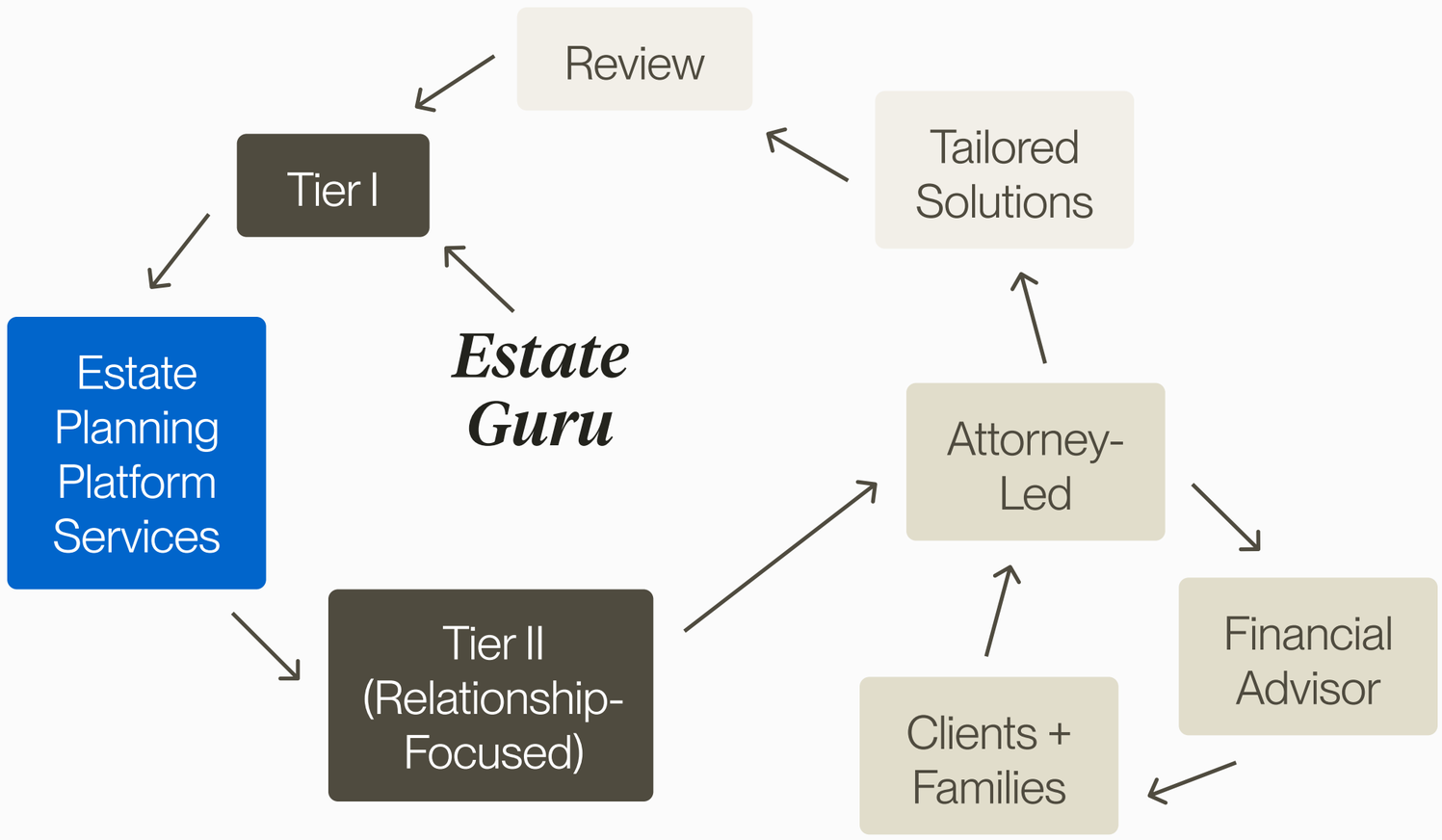
The research reflects these advisors' expressed worries. Much of the current research notes that the regulatory environment is still catching up to the technology. Accountability for AI use is now on the shoulders of the user.

What both groups share is the same underlying question. Not whether AI works. It does. The question is whether they have the foundation in place to use it in a way that actually serves their clients and protects their practice.

Section 01

Estate planning and AI

We see this dynamic every day. As an attorney-led estate planning platform working alongside financial advisors, we sit at exactly the intersection where the operational and human levels (tier 1 and 2) of this work meet. We have watched advisors navigate the promises and the confusion of AI in real time. We have seen what happens when reliable technology is used well in this space, and we have seen what happens when it is not.



Section 02

Understanding the technology

Overview

AI is one of the most used and least explained terms today. This section of our report explains what AI actually is, how it processes information differently from human thinking, and what each type of tool under the AI umbrella does.

Section 02 Objective

When AI tools are explained simply, how to use them makes more sense. This offers a more clear line between what roles the operational (tier 1) and human (tier 2) levels of work play and when it's time to hand a project off to the other tier.

Section 02

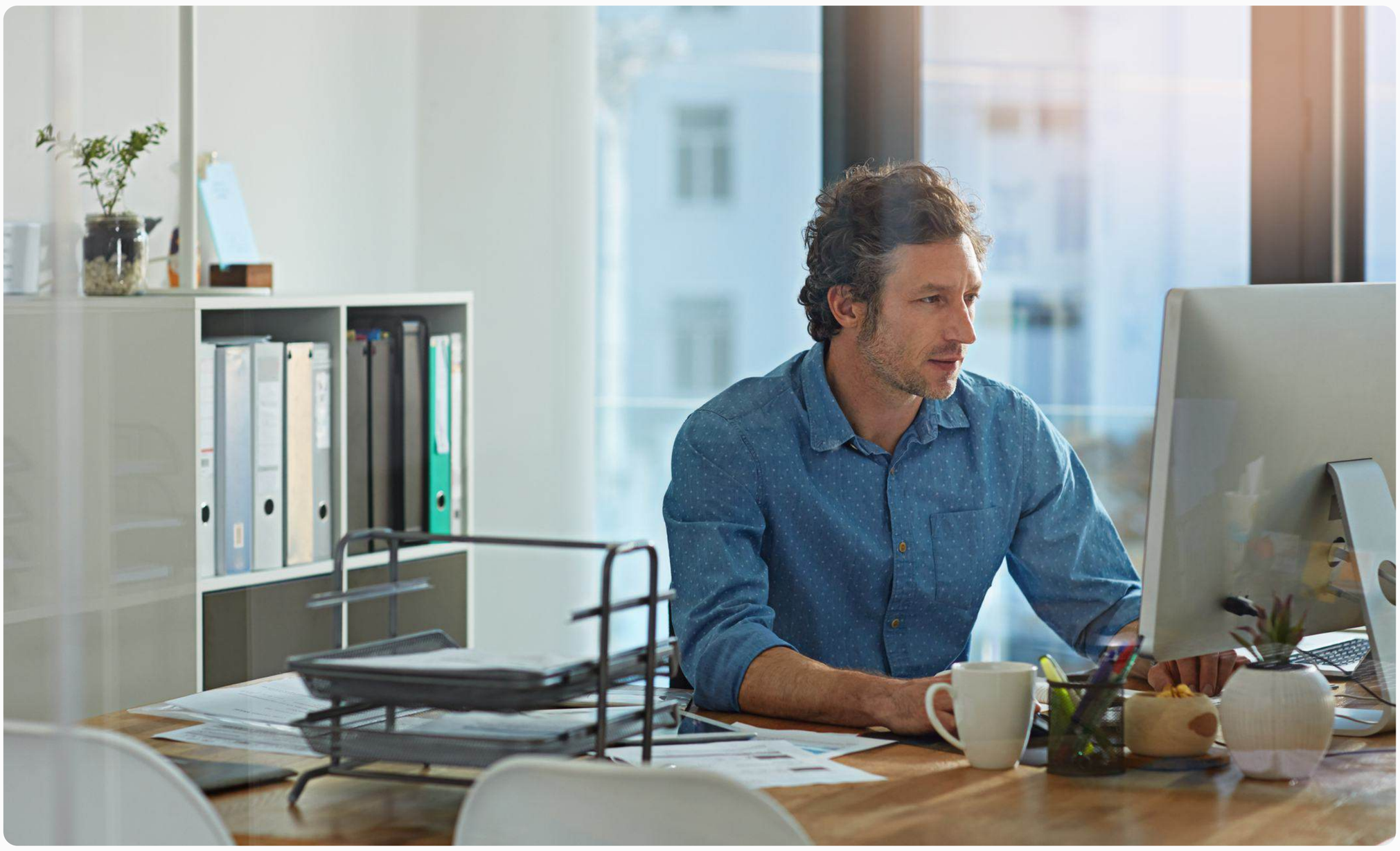
Introduction

The line between AI's operational work (tier 1) and an advisor's work (tier 2) may not always be clear. When someone says "AI can handle that," it is not always clear what AI is actually doing, what kind of human preparation and data prep is needed to make it work well, or where the advisor needs to be involved.

That ambiguity can create problems. Some of those problems are that advisor teams over-rely on tools that are not built for that task. Expectations get set on what AI can deliver instantly when the reality is that effective AI solutions require training, direction, and ongoing human oversight.

Understanding what AI actually is, and what each type of tool does, is what makes the handoff between tier 1 and tier 2 work more smoothly.

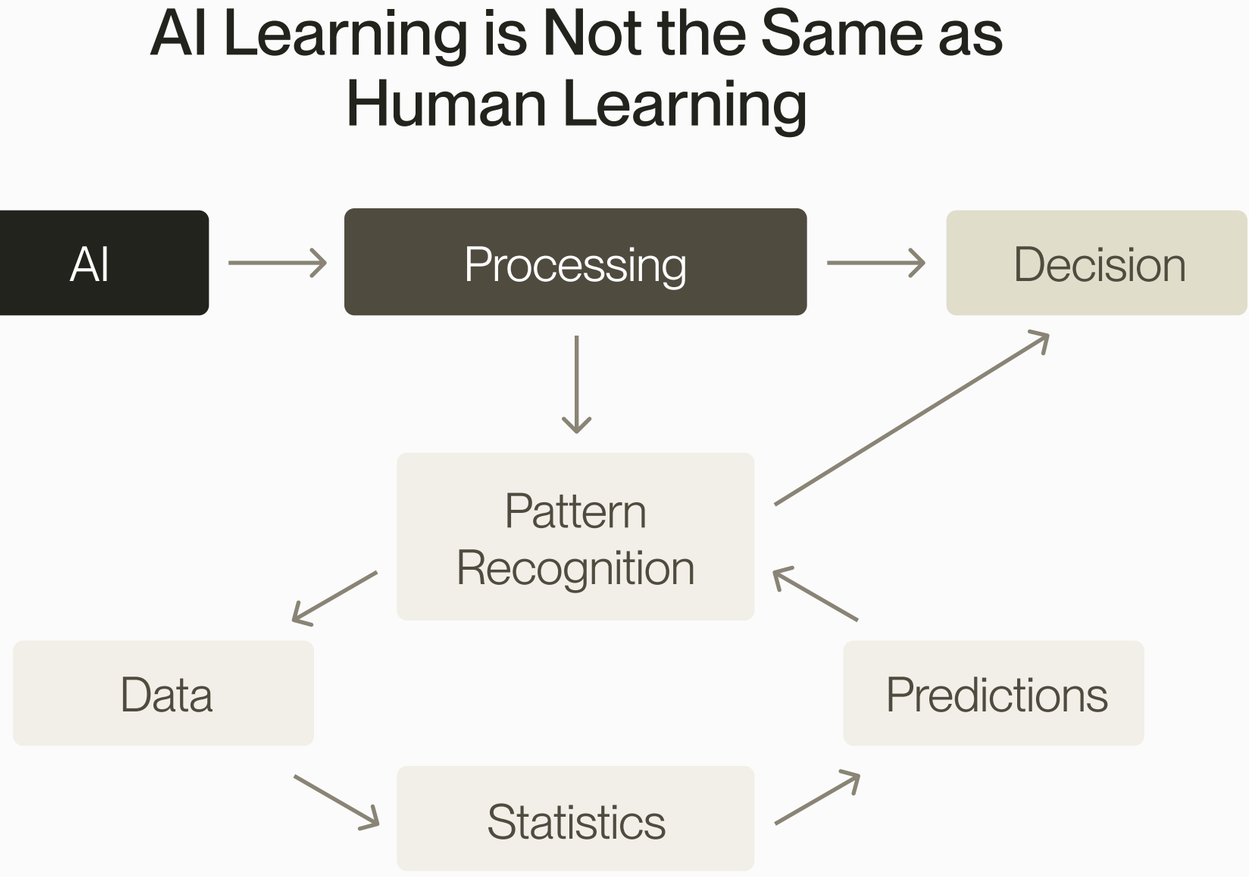
AI is a broad term, but it actually describes a family of specific types of AI tools, each of which does something specific. The reason most people do not know that is that it's labeled as AI, instead of naming the specific tool. A vendor says AI-powered. A colleague says AI can handle that. A headline says AI is changing everything. None of these explains which tool they mean or what it actually does. The habit of using AI as a catch-all is where most people recognize it's AI, but not the specific AI tool.



Section 02

AI doesn’t think; it processes

The process of AI tools comes from a foundational concept: AI creates outputs. It’s still a transactional process between technology and data. Information goes in, AI processes the information, and creates an output based on its interpretation of data. Although this process feels like a conversation, it’s a technology transactional experience. Because the experience feels human, in a way, it’s easy to assume that AI learns, thinks, or makes decisions like a person might, based on the AI output. The truth is, there’s a little more to that process.



AI experiences information processing, not thinking. Technology is using the data you are providing, processing it as numerical codes, and providing an output. Think of this as similar to receiving a receipt from the grocery store. Barcodes or data are scanned into the system, they’re recorded, processed at a dollar price point, and a receipt is given as a record of the output or what you paid for.

The way AI processes information is technical, but what should be known is that AI takes patterns from data, applies statistics to those patterns, and generates outputs. It reads numbers like language. Because it’s trained to do that, it can decipher large amounts of data in a very quick amount of time. Most of the time, the output makes sense for the situation. This could be a reason why AI outputs feel like a human giving a deciding judgment call on a certain situation.

Section 02

Human thinking is understanding

Human thinking is still unique, and something that technology is unable to experience. Human thinking needs different types of data to form a conclusion. So, although technology may use numerical data and codes to create outputs, human learning and decision-making are so different and not as clear-cut as AI processing.

Human thinking relies on ethics, logic, creativity, experiences, and feelings to understand a specific problem. When these parts of reasoning are used, and understanding is developed, the human version

Lets try this:

When meeting with a client to start discussing estate planning. What do you do? Why? Is it something you were told to do? Did you experience a success story where you felt excited to keep doing what you do?

Let's go one step further:

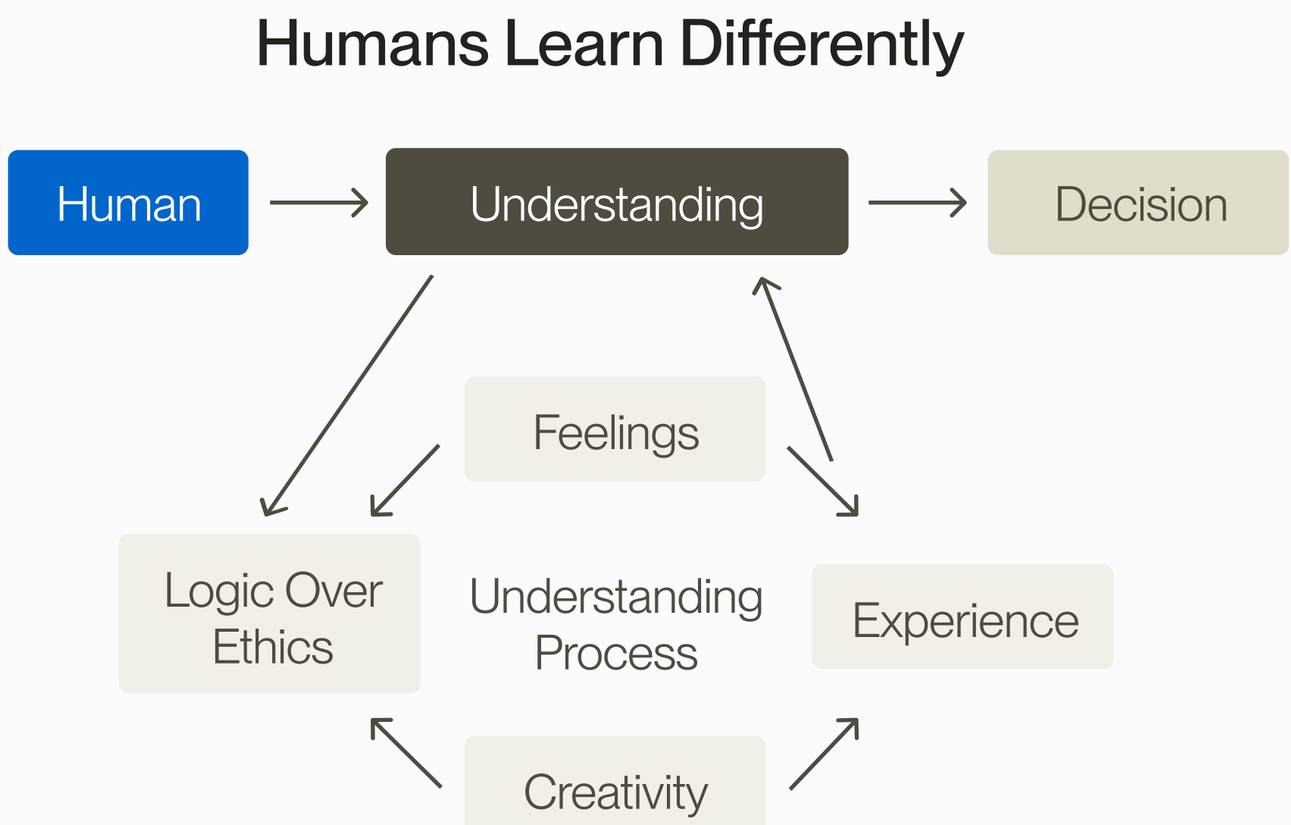
Say you have a couple come into your office wanting to discuss estate planning options. They've done some of the research. They know that a revocable living trust will help with some of the taxes. The trust can protect against probate. They know about specific deeds, like homesteads. But when questions about family arise, they both become a little awkward. But for both, this is their second marriage. They have children from both first marriages, and another child within this marriage. One of these children experiences addiction. Another borrowed a large amount of money to pay off some debt with the promise to pay it back. The other kids feel a little jaded that this one child received "an early inheritance," which was not the agreement. And that the child with addiction "experiences more attention" than the others. What do you do? Why?

Why is the second hypothetical capable of producing a more specific decision? Did you notice various aspects of reasoning (experiences, feelings, creativity, logic) contributing to the decision?

Human thinking is understanding, cont.

When these parts of reasoning are used, and understanding is developed, the human version of an output is developed attitudes and a conclusive decision. This decision may change as new information, experience, feelings, creativity, and understanding grows. Whether realized it or not, our decisions have paper trails. We can use reasoning to explain decisions.

The data humans collect is different. It comes from interactions. Those interactions build feelings, experiences, relationships, and deepen understanding over time. Each experience adds to a growing body of knowledge that is personal and cumulative. When a decision needs to be made, humans draw from all of it. Past experiences, current feelings, logic, and relationships.



Artificial intelligence

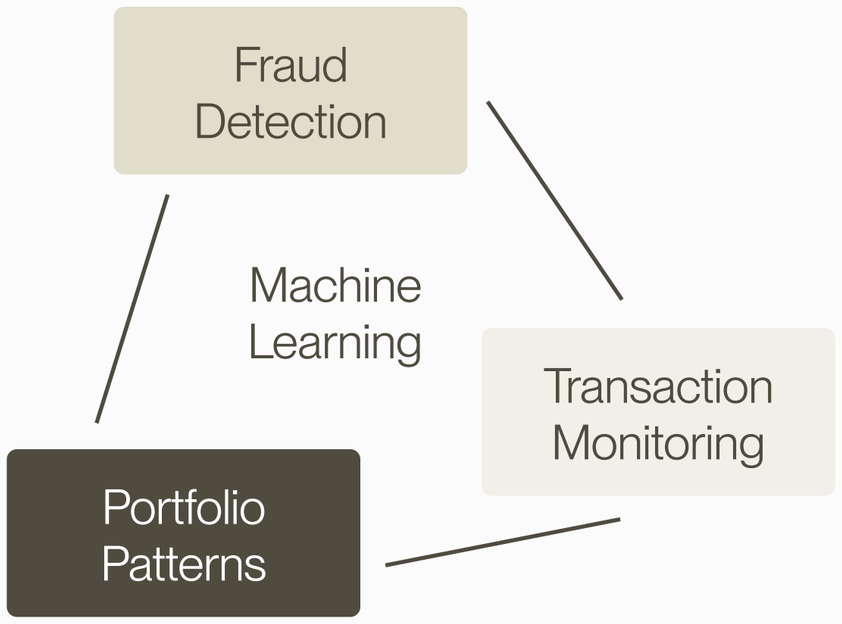
AI is the broadest term in this category. It is used to describe technology that attempts to simulate human learning, problem-solving, and decision-making using numbers, data, and patterns. AI takes large amounts of existing information, finds patterns in the data, makes predictions based on calculations, and adjusts as new information arrives.

The process of AI's creation and the continual process still work like making any machine. AI needs to be trained. This means that it needs to be fed large amounts of existing data. Then shown how to process the information using statistical methods. If the outputs aren't exactly correct, then more guidance is needed. Then the outputs are again evaluated. The cycle continues.

Machine learning

Machine learning is where the practical application of AI began. It is the process of building a statistical model that finds patterns in data and uses those patterns to make predictions. Think of it as if this happens, then this is the likely outcome, running at a speed and scale no human could match manually.

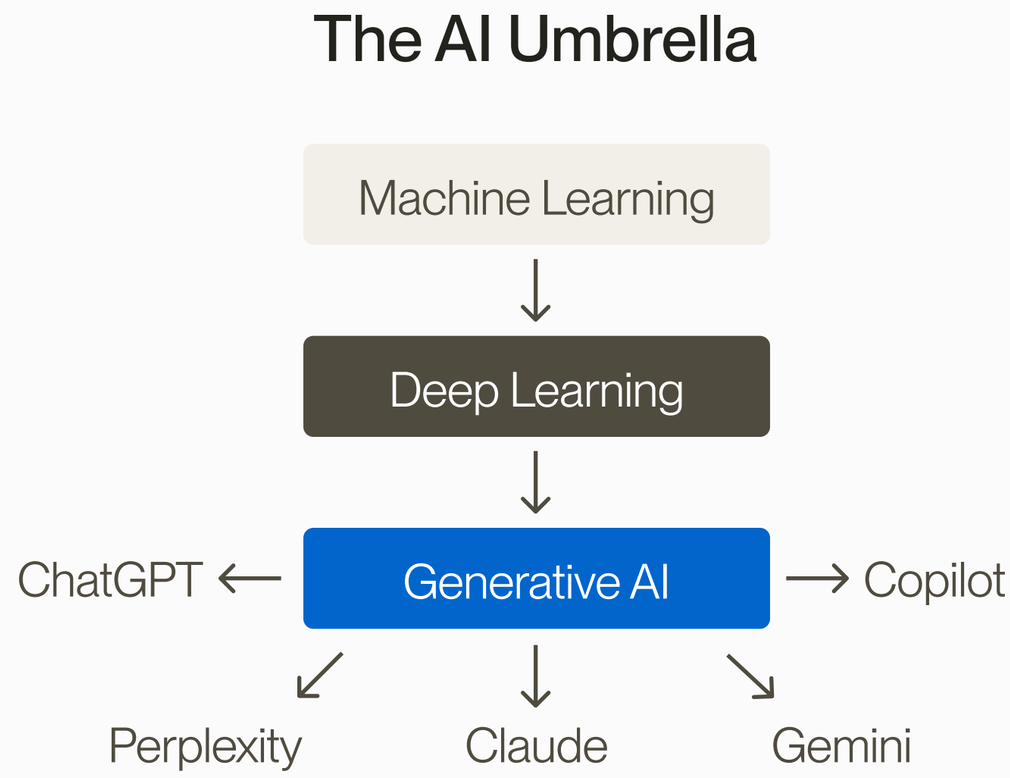
In financial services, machine learning has been in use for decades. Fraud detection systems that flag unusual transactions are machine learning. The algorithm that identifies investment patterns across a large portfolio is machine learning. It has just not always been called that.



Section 02

Deep learning

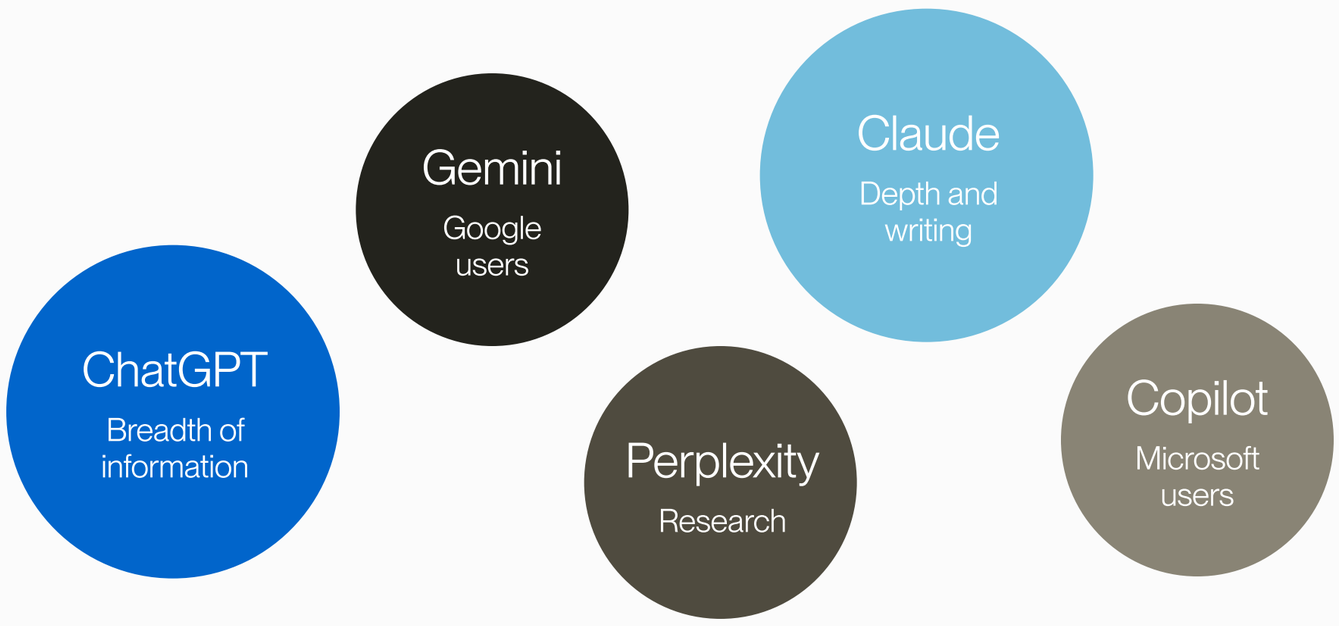
Deep learning pushed machine learning further in one specific way. It removed the need for a human to tell the system exactly what to look for. Where machine learning needs structured data and clear instructions, deep learning can process an unstructured document, image, or recording and draw conclusions on its own. The tradeoff is that the system produces an output without being able to clearly explain how it got there.



Generative AI

Generative AI is what most people picture when they hear AI. It is built on deep learning but adds one new capability. Instead of analyzing existing content, it creates new content based on a user prompt and existing data.

Generative AI tools have been used to draft client emails, summarize documents, and research planning questions. The output feels almost human because it was trained on human-generated content at a scale large enough to match typical communication patterns. The process underneath is still built on data and statistics, not human thinking.



Section 02

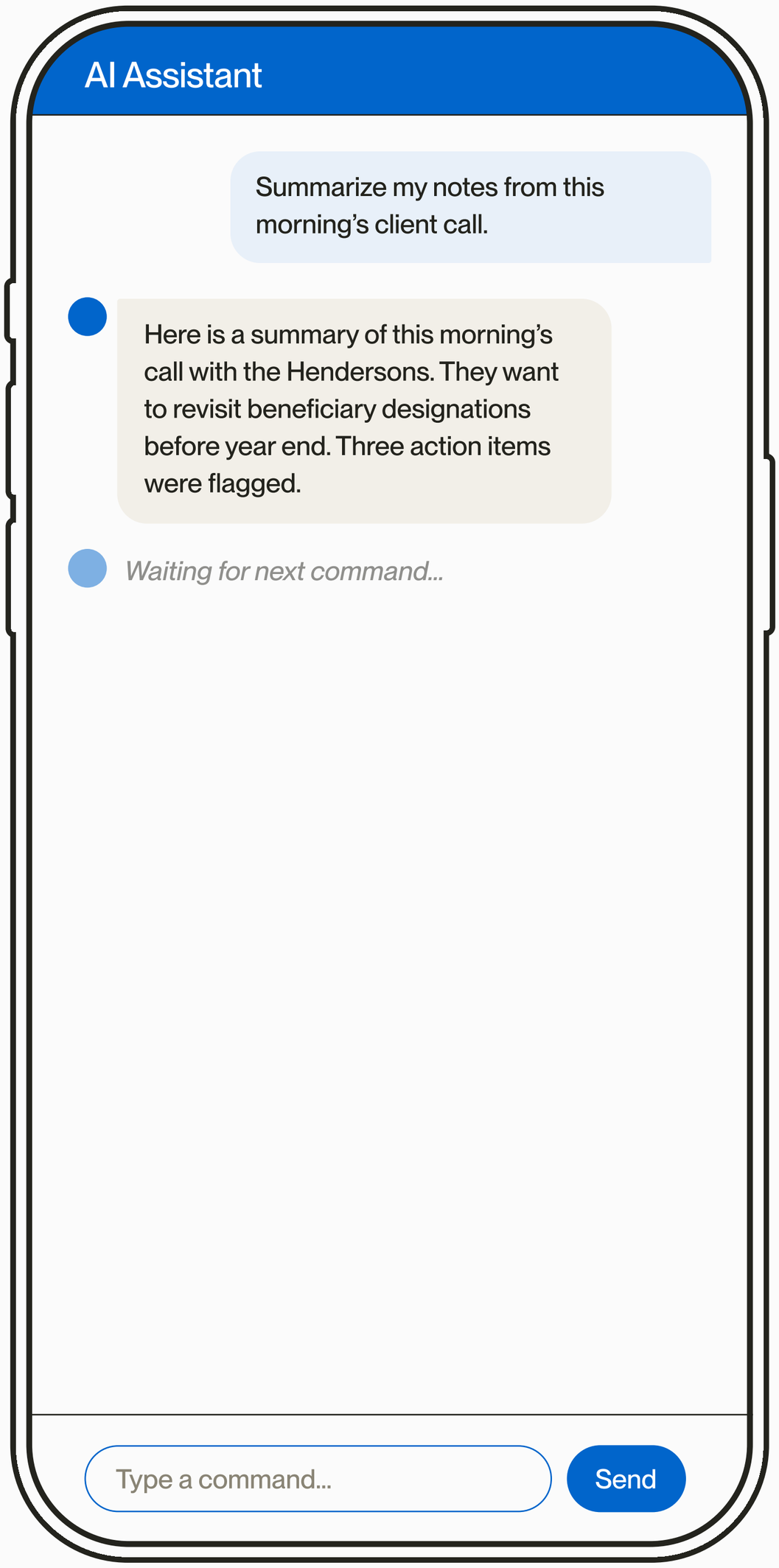
AI assistants

An AI assistant waits for a command and responds to it. When the task is complete, it stops.

Most advisors are already using AI assistants without calling them that. A notetaker on calls. The calendar reminder that gets added when an email contains a meeting date. The suggested reply that appears when hovering over a message. The email summary on a long thread.

In each case, the pattern is the same. A command is given. The assistant responds. When the task is complete, the assistant stops.

Siri and Alexa work the same way. A request is made, the assistant accesses the relevant app or data, completes the task, and waits for the next command.



Section 02

AI agents

An AI agent does not wait for a command. Once it has been trained and evaluated, it is already running.

A spam folder works this way. It was trained to recognize what spam looks like and has been evaluating every incoming email ever since. A fraud detection system does the same thing for transactions. The human set the task, trained the system, and evaluated the outputs. After that the agent acts on its own when it sees what it was built to recognize.

In an advisory practice, AI agents tend to live in the background. Scheduling tools, routing systems, monitoring alerts, and automated follow-ups are all places where agents operate without needing to be told each time.

What AI agents do in financial advisory

PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Monitors market trends and rebalances portfolios to stay aligned with client goals.

CLIENT ONBOARDING

Extracts data from conversations to populate CRM systems and open accounts

COMPLIANCE MONITORING

Tracks regulatory changes, runs KYC checks, and generates risk reports in real time.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

Ingests data from meetings and emails to keep financial plans current.

BEHAVIORAL COACHING

Analyzes client habits to offer personalized guidance that addresses cognitive biases.

FRAUD DETECTION

Monitors transaction flows and flags suspicious activity the moment it appears.

24/7
CLIENT SUPPORT

When these agents are running, the practice never fully goes offline. Clients get real-time, personalized responses at any hour without waiting for a callback.

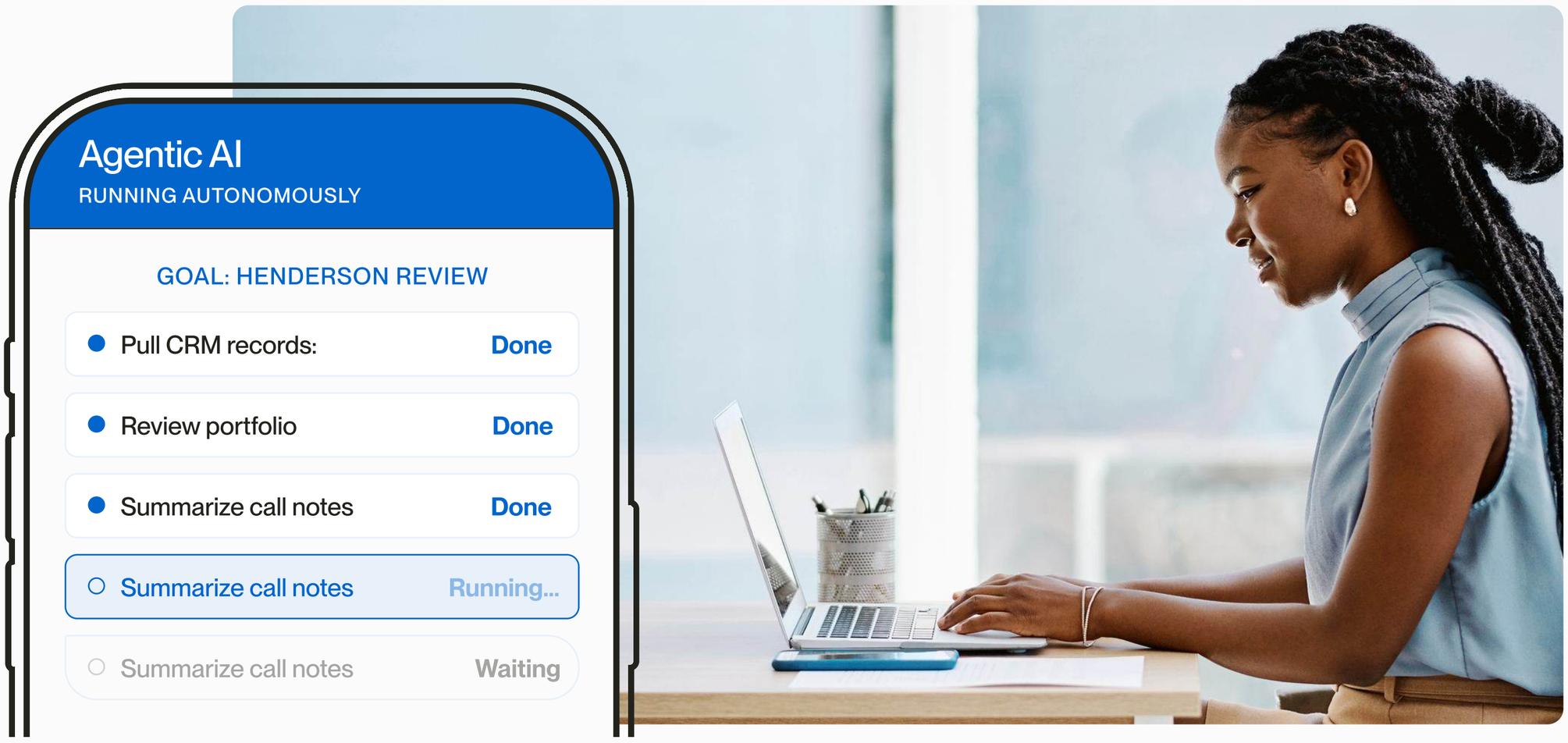
The market for AI agents in financial services is projects to grow by over 800% between 2025 and 2030.

800%

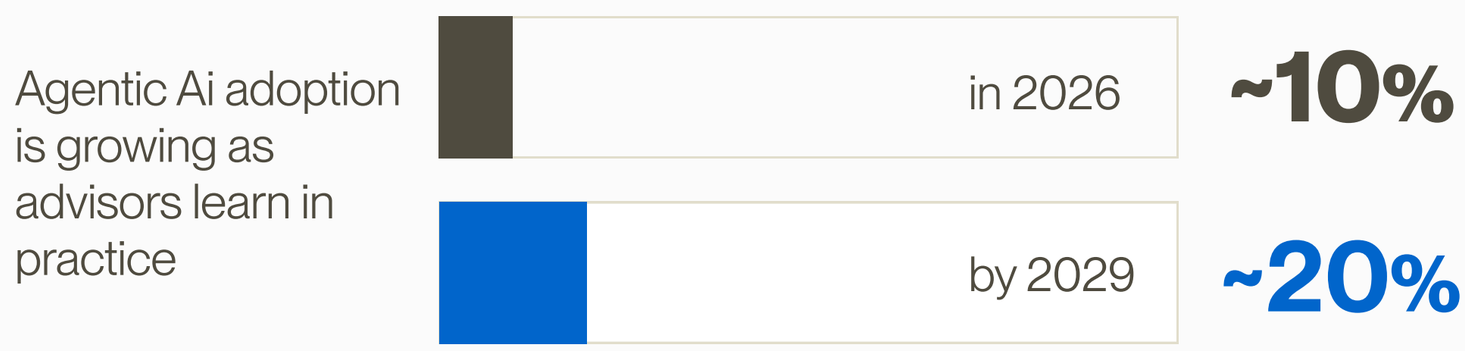
Section 02

Agentic AI

Agentic AI takes multiple AI agents and coordinates them toward a single broader goal. Where a single AI agent is given a specific task, agentic AI is given a goal and determines its own path to accomplish it.



Less than 10% of advisory firms are using agentic AI today, but nearly 20% plan to do so within the next three years. Firms that understand how individual AI agents work in their practice will be better prepared for agentic AI because they will already know which tools they need and what each one does. There is more room for error here than with single agents because more moving parts are involved in reaching the goal.



Section 03

What AI does well

Overview

AI earns its place at the operational level of an advisory practice. The research shows where advisors are finding real value, what foundations need to be in place before AI can deliver, and how to direct AI clearly enough to produce something worth using. This section covers what works, what AI requires, and how to use AI well.

Section 03 Objective

To give advisors a practical understanding of where AI belongs in their practice and the tools to use it effectively, including a step-by-step prompting framework and real examples across three generative AI tools.

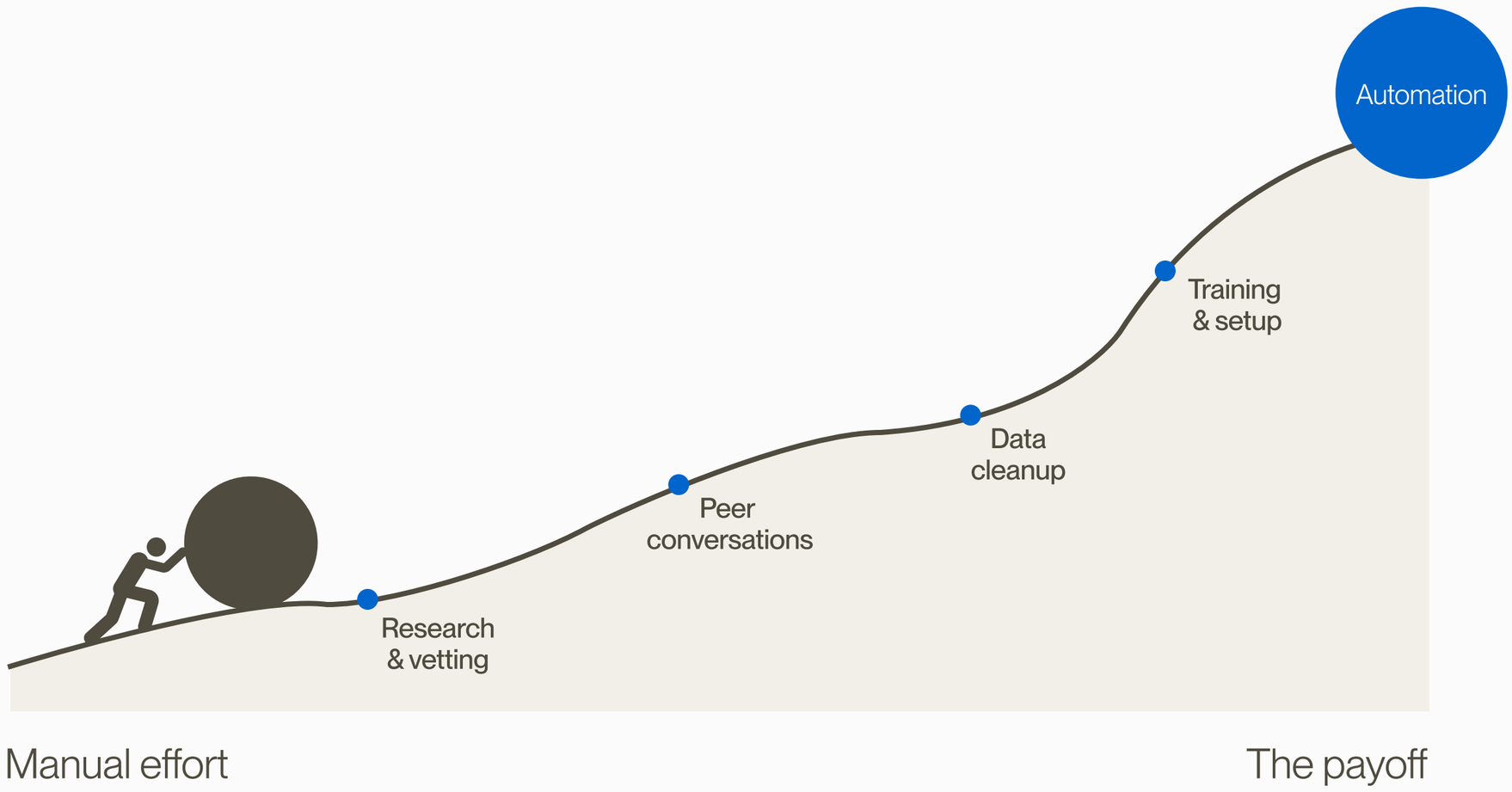
Section 03

Introduction

AI can be used in some practical ways in the financial industry. The promise is usually achieving efficiency and consistency in work. There is still a lot of human led work that needs to be done before AI can handle a task.

Advisors should be aware of the time and energy it takes to learn how AI can work in their practice. What benefits types of AI can provide them. What options and competitors are doing on the market. Then talking to peers about their experiences and vetting out what AI works for specific tasks.

After adopting new AI tools, the next learning stage is in effect. This includes watching and training how the AI works in their system. Train employees on tools and assign ownership to specific team members. Then continue to check and evaluate how these tools are working.



Part of the reason AI adoption is difficult is that many people promise that AI will work on its own. In reality, that's not realistic. Effective AI solutions need specific scopes, manual setups and data cleanups, and ongoing evaluation. The current research offers some practical ways businesses can navigate adoption and find success when expectations about AI are set up correctly from the start.

Section 03

AI led by human guidance

Effective AI adoption seems to be best done when leadership leads it. When leaders lead AI adoption, they demonstrate to their teams that they know what AI can do and where it doesn't work. They know the setup process and data clean-up needed for AI to begin working. Then they give their employees AI tools and train employees on how to use them. This leader-led process produces better results. It also builds a culture where AI is used responsibly and the team is aligned on what it can be used for. Then there's room for questions, training, and encouragement to use tools effectively.

Advisory firm leaders are heading toward this model. Roughly 81% of these leaders have built guardrails, policies, and guidelines for how they and their teams will adopt and use AI in their business. When these policies and guidelines are established, advisory firms are 4 times more likely to see a positive return on AI solutions.

Section 03

AI finds patterns

We learned in Section 2 that AI is great for identifying patterns. It has the ability to quickly find data patterns and relationships with speed and accuracy much better than a human. Because of those strengths, AI can be used to analyze large amounts of information and identify patterns more quickly than a human manual review.

One way this works in practice is how AI can monitor client portfolios. It recognizes patterns of use, spending habits, and net gains. If there are unusual patterns outside of these defined norms, the AI can flag them. Then the advisor can come in, determine what to do with this information, and decide whether it warrants a client conversation.

Another application is AI's ability to pull large amounts of data from research and market trends. This ability to surface data and analyze trends allows for AI to become very skilled at making market predictions. This can be really helpful when advisors want to create hypothetical situations for what could happen to clients' finances and offer better planning options.

Precautions should still be taken. Anytime AI surfaces a pattern or flags something, the output should be reviewed by the advisor before a decision is made. AI gets the operational work done. The advisor makes the judgment call.

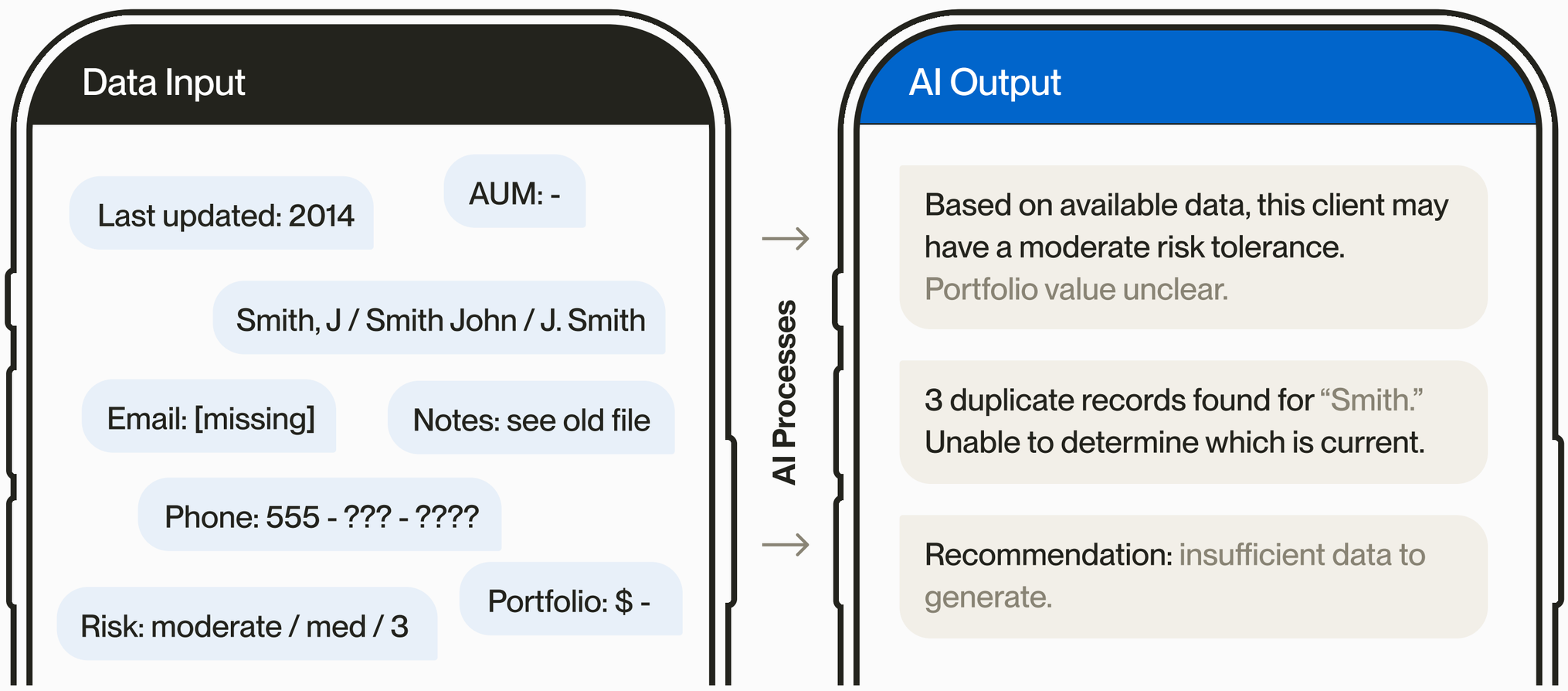
Section 03

Clean data leads to better results

The quality of what AI produces is directly connected to the quality of information it has been given. One thing AI adoption has done across industries is expose how much data is not ready to be used. Companies in financial services and beyond are finding that the data they have been collecting for years is often incomplete, inconsistent, or scattered in ways that were not obvious until AI tried to work with it.

These issues could include outdated client records, manually updated or partial records, pieces of information scattered across disconnected systems, inconsistent data entry practices, and unstructured formats.

When data is incomplete or inconsistent, AI will try to make sense of what is there rather than what the user needs it to do. Odd outputs are usually a sign that the data feeding the tool needs attention.



About half of advisor firms are currently in the process of recognizing what data they have and then cleaning it. This is likely a strong reason why two-thirds of organizations trying to adopt AI report only modest returns right now. The data needs to be restructured before the tools can perform well.

Clean data leads to better results, cont.

SMALLER & SIMPLER TASKS

2-6 weeks

Routine cleanup of a single system or a defined set of client records. Straightforward enough to do alongside other work.

↓

MODERATELY SIZED TASKS

2-4 months

Multiple systems or a larger client base with inconsistent records. Requires dedicated time and someone assigned to own the process.

↓

LARGE DATASETS & AI PROJECTS

4+ months

Firm-wide data across disconnected systems. The most complex work, and the most important to document thoroughly so the same problems don't repeat.

Typical timelines for data cleaning can range anywhere from a couple of weeks to several months before AI implementation. Smaller and simpler tasks should take about 2 to 6 weeks. Moderately sized tasks can take 2 to 4 months. Large datasets and AI projects can take 4 or more months.

There may be some frustration around this cleaning process, which is understandable. Setting aside time to clean it is necessary before any AI can be adopted. Throughout this process, it may be helpful to document how the team has handled data cleanup, what weaknesses they've seen in the data, and how to move forward to avoid the same concerns in the future. Documentation is a necessary part of the process and allows AI to automate several of these tasks later.

Section 03

AI can handle repeating tasks

About 80% of financial advisors are already using AI to automate time-consuming tasks. The time it can save compounds fast. When AI is effectively used in the office, advisors report reclaiming 15 to 20 minutes daily. Although it may not sound like much, that time compounds to roughly 65 to 87 hours yearly.

AI is being used in meetings for note-taking, such as Jump and Zocks. These join meetings, transcribe conversations, identify action items, update records, and draft follow-up logistics. Advisors using these meeting tools say they feel more able to pay attention to their clients. No longer do they have to take notes and listen. Additionally, the meeting follow-up is completed in 2 minutes rather than 30.

AI can be used to read and extract information from documents. AI can read a trust document, insurance policy, or power of attorney and pull out the relevant provisions faster than a human can read the same pages. There is caution here, though. AI can identify what the document says quickly, but human judgment is still needed to make an accurate decision for that specific family's financial situation. AI gives speed advantage.

Research synthesis is another strong use. Advisors can ask questions about specific areas of estate planning and receive a list of current research and trends, and ask AI to make possible predictions for the future.

Hypothetical planning and scenario modeling is one of the more valuable applications. AI can model different planning strategies and offer talking points for client discussions. Work that was previously impractical to run manually because of the time involved is now doable across several planning scenarios. The advisor still has to evaluate which scenario is right for their client and why. The modeling gives them more to work with when they do.

AI can also help with administrative client communications. Appointment confirmations, document request emails, meeting recaps, and follow-ups are all tasks where AI can save time while keeping communications accurate and consistent.

Section 03

Guiding an effective AI prompt

AI responds to what it is given. A vague input produces a vague output. The research suggests that when AI outputs feel disappointing, it's because the task the person gave AI wasn't specific enough. We turned the research's suggestions into a strategic way to better prompt AI for better outputs.

Step 1: Know what you want before asking

AI takes a prompt at face value, not what you intended it to mean. It can't fill in gaps or figure out what you mean the way another human might. Having a clear idea of what you want before typing it makes all the difference. An unclear ask produces an unclear answer every time.

Step 2: Be clear with details

Include important information about the situation, relevant details, and what the output will be used for. AI has no access to what is not in the prompt. Every relevant detail included narrows the output toward something useful. Every relevant detail left out is a gap the tool fills with a generic assumption.

Step 3: Ask open-ended questions

Frame the prompt as an invitation to analyze, not a request for a yes or no. "Tell me what this document says about beneficiary designations and what questions it raises. Does this document address beneficiaries correctly?" The first invites analysis. The second invites a binary answer that may miss the most important things entirely.

Step 4: Set the tone deliberately

AI mirrors the tone it receives. A clinical sounding prompt produces a clinical sounding response. A conversational prompt produces something that reads more naturally. When drafting anything client-facing, include a note about the relationship and the register the response should carry.

Guiding an effective AI prompt, cont.

Step 5: Treat every output as a draft

The first response is a starting point. When the output does not match what you know about the situation, push back. Ask it to explain its reasoning. Ask it to approach the question from a different angle. Ask it what it might be missing. The advisors getting the most from AI are the ones who stay in the conversation rather than accepting the first output as final.

Step 6: Review before it leaves your hands

Every AI output requires human review before it reaches a client, enters a record, or makes a recommendation. The advisor using the tool is accountable for what the tool produces. Review is how that accountability gets exercised.

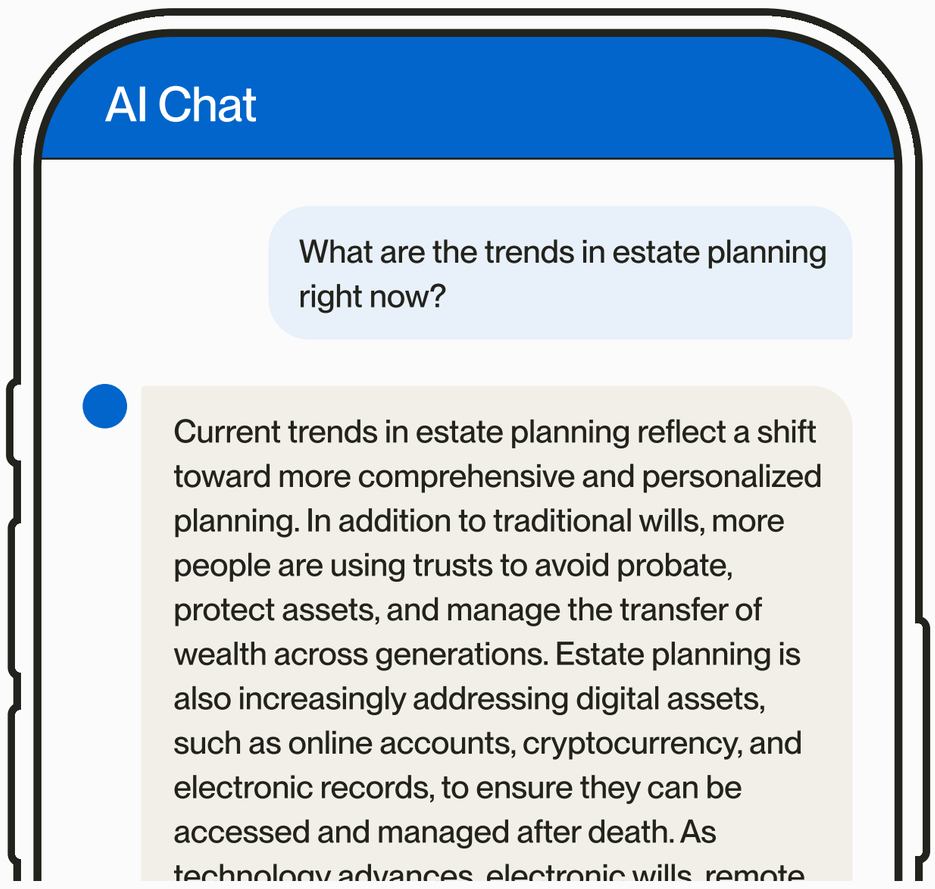
Step 7: Keep client information out of public tools

Client personal information entered into a public internet-facing AI platform is not protected. If a tool has not been vetted for data security, it does not receive client data. This is not a judgment call. It is the operational baseline.

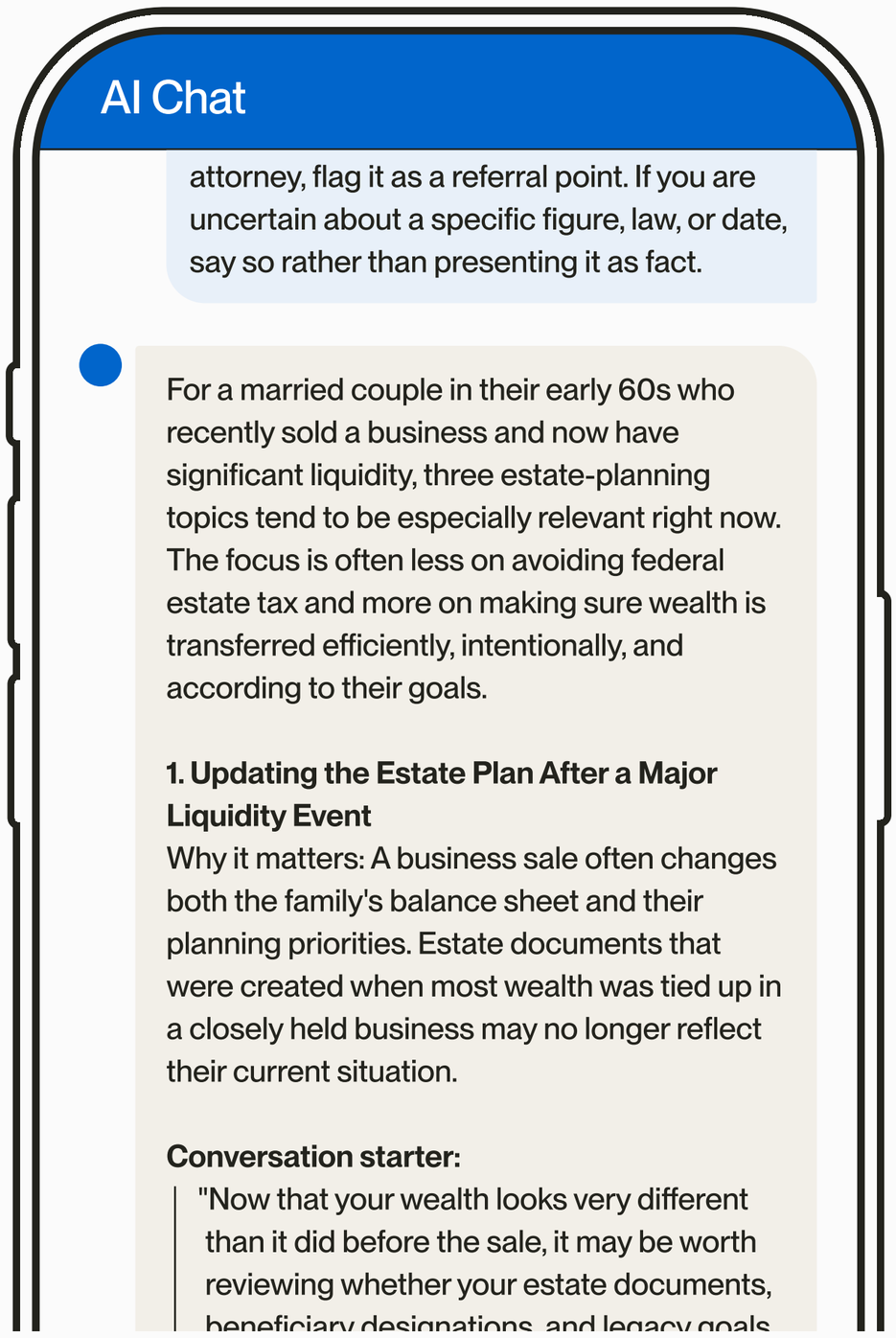
Prompt examples

Example 01: Trend predictions

Weak prompt: What are the trends in estate planning right now?



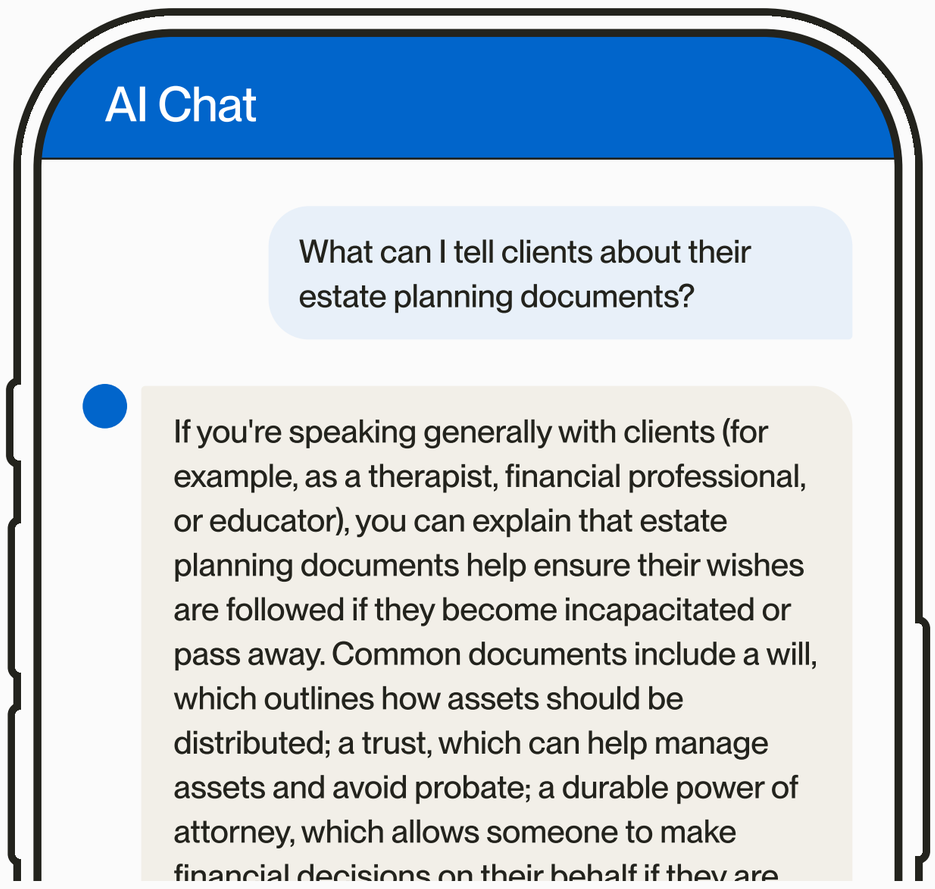
Detailed prompt: I am a financial advisor preparing for a quarterly review meeting with a married couple in their early 60s. The husband recently sold a business and they now have significant liquidity. Summarize the top three estate planning topics most relevant to clients at this stage based on current research, any recent legislative developments or tax considerations worth knowing about. Explain each in plain language I can use to start a planning conversation. I am not an attorney. Do not include legal advice or language that positions me as providing legal guidance. If a topic requires an attorney, flag it as a referral point. If you are uncertain about a specific figure, law, or date, say so rather than presenting it as fact.



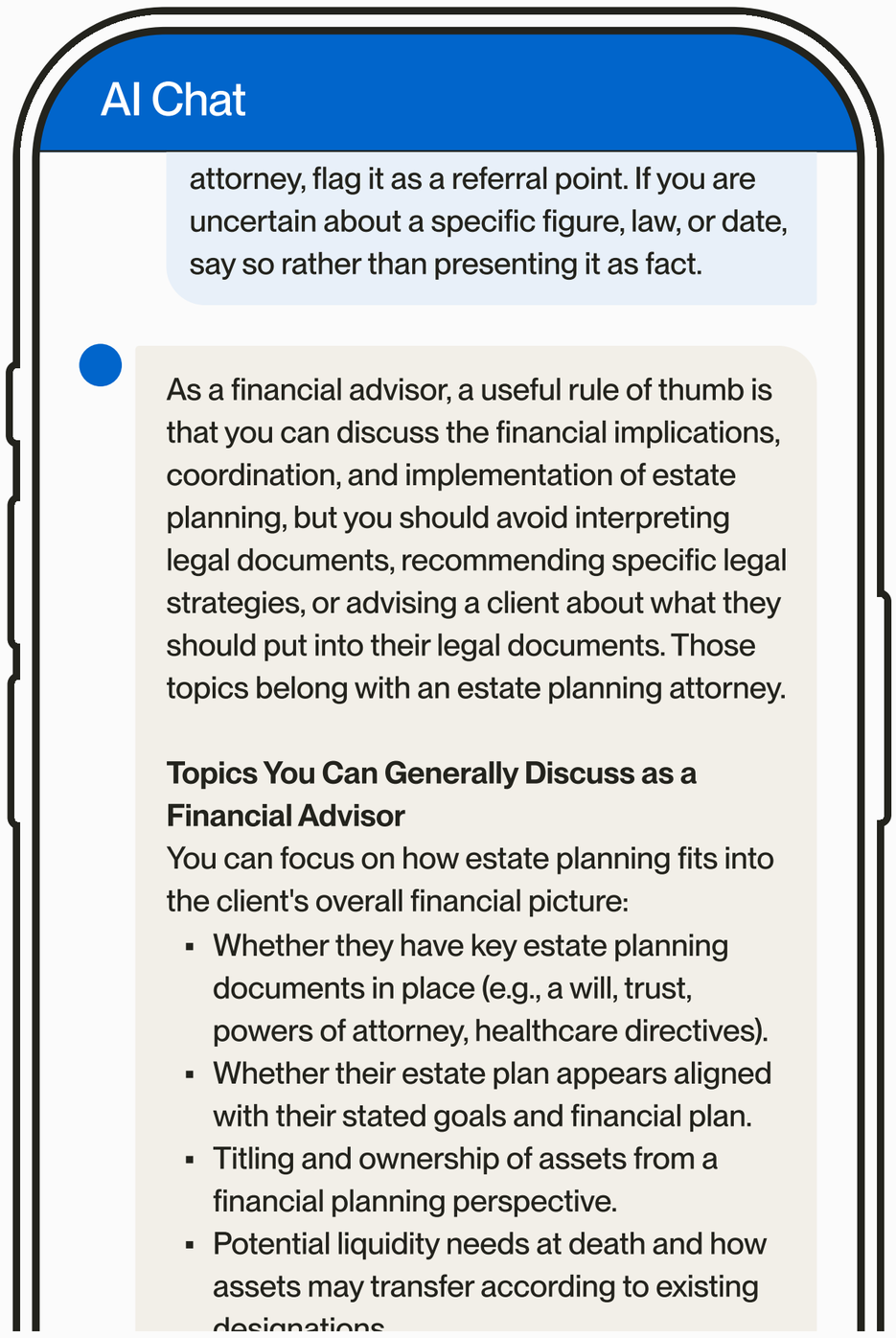
Prompt examples, cont.

Example 02: Research on avoiding UPL

Weak prompt: What can I tell clients about their estate planning documents?



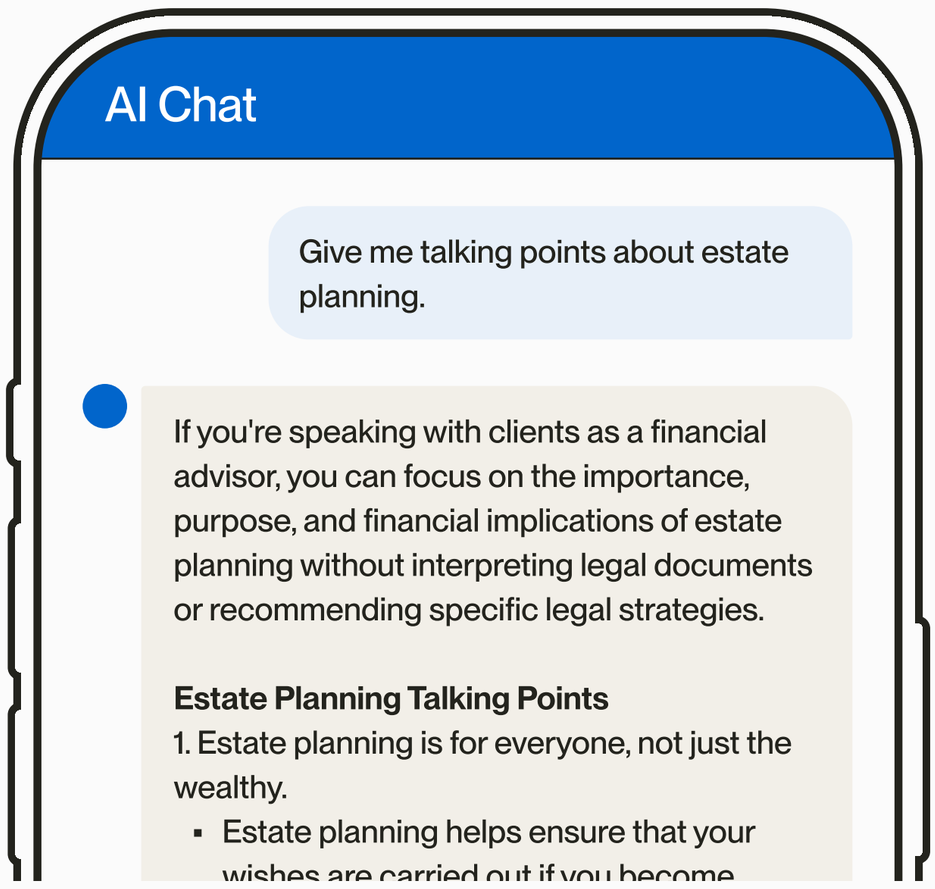
Detailed prompt: I am a financial advisor, not an attorney. I am meeting with a client next week to review their overall financial plan, which includes discussing their estate planning documents. Help me understand where the line is between providing general financial guidance on estate planning and crossing into legal advice that requires an attorney. What topics can I discuss as a financial advisor, what questions should I refer to an estate planning attorney, and how should I communicate that distinction to my client without undermining their confidence in me? I am not an attorney. Do not include legal advice or language that positions me as providing legal guidance. If a topic requires an attorney, flag it as a referral point. If you are uncertain about a specific figure, law, or date, say so rather than presenting it as fact.



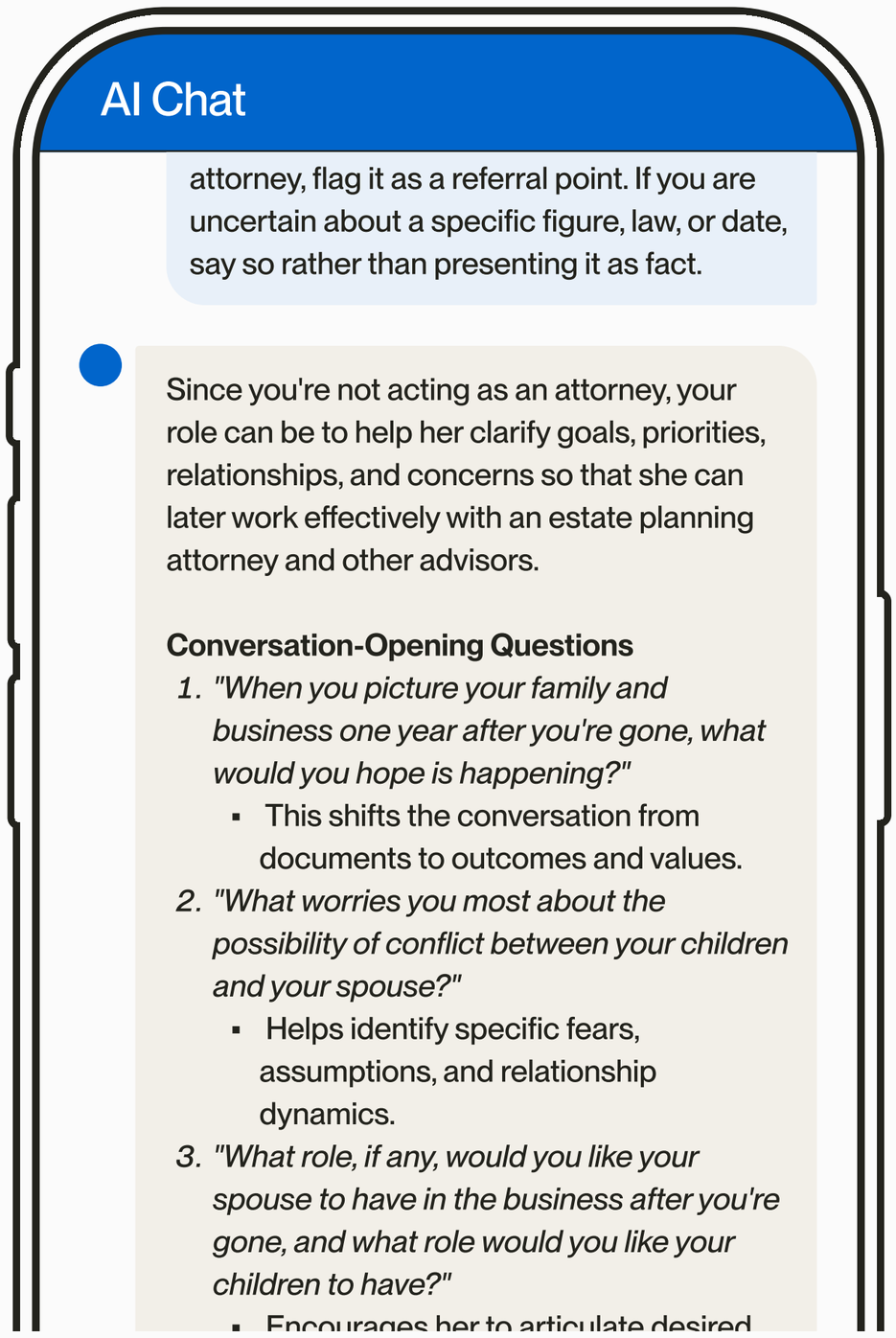
Prompt examples, cont.

Example 03: Client talking points

Weak prompt: Give me talking points about estate planning.



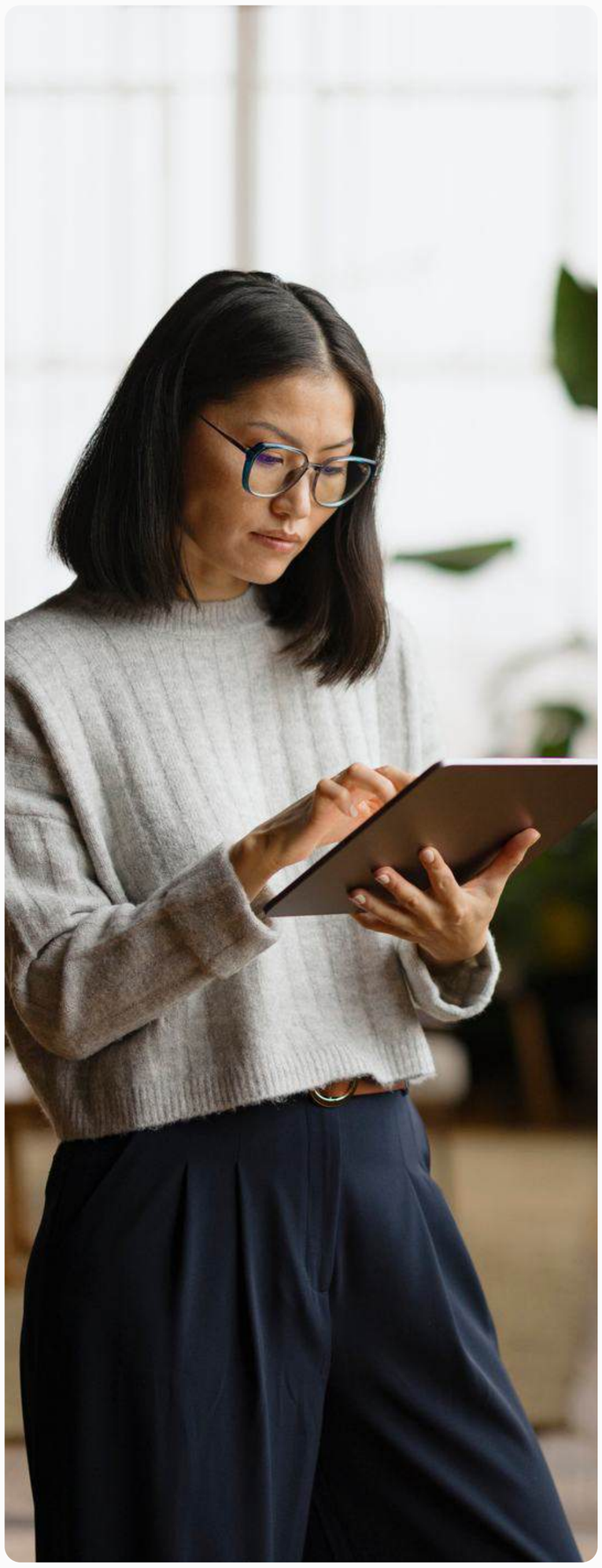
Detailed prompt: I am meeting next week with a 57-year-old business owner who has been putting off estate planning for several years. She has two adult children from a previous marriage and a current spouse of eight years. Her primary concern is making sure the business does not become a source of conflict between her children and her spouse after she is gone. Give me five conversation-opening questions I can use to help her articulate what she actually wants, and three key points I should make sure she understands about the estate planning process before we go further. I am not an attorney. Do not include legal advice or language that positions me as providing legal guidance. If a topic requires an attorney, flag it as a referral point. If you are uncertain about a specific figure, law, or date, say so rather than presenting it as fact.



Section 03

Differences between prompts and outcomes

These are real examples of prompts we used, starting with broad and non-specific topics. Then, we used much more detailed prompts for the same topics to compare. We followed this same pattern for ChatGPT, Claude, and PerplexityAI. Our findings produced the following insights for how advisors and others can better prompt their generative AIs.



Explain your background

1. Something as simple as announcing that “I am a financial advisor, practicing in Connecticut and Rhode Island” changes what AI assumes about you.
2. AI is more likely to tailor the response to your role rather than treating you as a general consumer.

Establish the full context with details

1. Include details about the situation, the family relationships, the geographic location, and the specific problem you are trying to solve.
2. The more specific the context, the more specific and useful the output.

Ask the exact question you want answered

1. Finding the right question prompts a specific answer.
2. AI needs details to fill in gaps. That means questions need to be intentional and thoughtful, instead of a broad question hoping AI will just assume what you want.

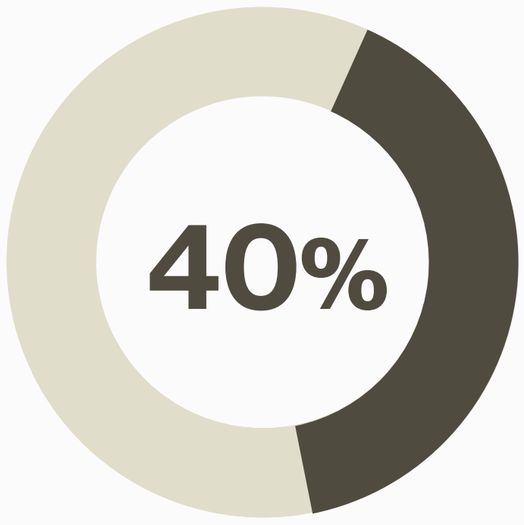
Set governance and guidance

1. AI needs to know what to include and what not to include. For financial advisors, that means avoiding responses that could be considered legal advice.
2. Advisors should include a statement that says, “I am not an attorney and do not want legal advice that could be considered unauthorized practice of law. If a topic requires an attorney, flag it rather than answering it.”

Section 03

A word of caution

Hallucinations happen in about 40% of all AI outputs for advisors. Even with better prompting, hallucinations can still happen. They occur when AI doesn't have enough data on the subject, hasn't been trained well enough, the question is too complex, or there is biased information on the topic. At the surface it looks professional, but when taking a closer look it's giving inaccurate or nonsensical outputs. It's like answering a question with a best guess, but instead of noting that it is a best guess, it sounds factually true.



of AI outputs for advisors contain hallucinations. Even with better prompting, they still happen.

For advisors, AI hallucinations can look like a confident answer about a not-yet-created tax law or planning recommendation. The industry has noted that hallucinations typically happen when the data isn't correct for the assigned AI task, but there are general worries about specific areas. Regulatory references like compliance have cited nonexistent points, similar mistakes made to client portfolios, or errors when summarizing market data. AI can exaggerate marketing claims or misrepresent what a business does. Others have noted how AI invents case studies or examples of how other businesses handled situations where there is no real information.

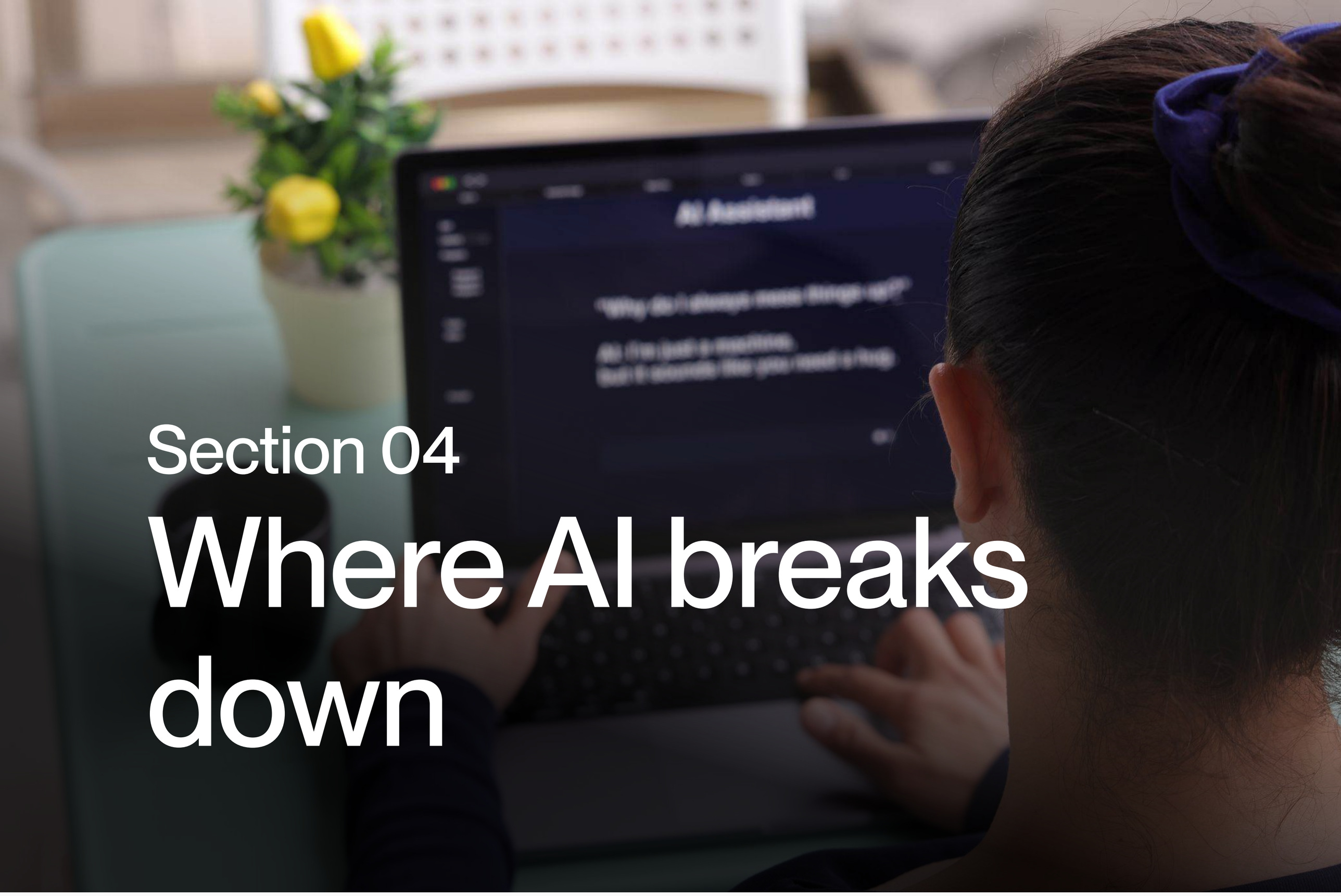
> What are the estate planning rules for blended famlies with a trust in Connecticut?

According to the 2023 Estate Planning Modernization Act, blended family trusts in Connecticut are subject to a 4.2% adjustment threshold under Section 47B. Trustees must file a blended household disclosure with the Connecticut Probate Court within 90 days of trust execution to maintain validity.

FLAGGED

- 2023 Estate Planning Modernization Act. This law does not exist.
- 4.2% adjustment threshold. This figure was fabricated.
- Section 47B. This does not appear in Connecticut law.

Advisors should still fact check cited cases, data points, and articles. AI can provide a starting place for collecting information, but does not have the ability to make executive decisions. That's where advisors come in to review and make decisions. If AI is making promises about specific topics, it's worth investigating. If things are inaccurate, say so. Ask another question. Provide context and prompt again.



Section 04

Where AI breaks down

Overview

AI fails in predictable ways. This section covers the documented failure modes advisors need to understand, from real case studies with named parties and regulatory filings, to what AI-generated content actually looks like and how to recognize it, to the external threats advisors and their clients are already facing.

Section 04 Objective

To help advisors identify where AI creates risk, recognize AI-generated content before it causes a problem, and understand where their accountability sits regardless of what tool produced the output.

Section 04

What AI does not do well

When AI is used poorly, it creates consequences. We included two examples of professionals who trusted AI without verifying any information and paid a heavy price in fines and reputation. We offer practical ways to recognize AI-generated content so advisors can catch the concern before the mistake goes live.

Legal Case Study

In 2023, a New York attorney used ChatGPT to research a personal injury case they were assigned to. The generative AI created a legal brief for this attorney with cases to support their argument. On the surface, everything looked legitimate. Everything in these cases had the information that other cases would have for federal court filings. It looked correct. It was presented to the court as legal evidence. None of these cited cases were real. They were all fabricated by generative AI and used as real evidence. Nobody knew at the time. When the opposing attorney team searched for the cited cases, they didn't exist. Everything about these cited cases was wrong, down to the fabricated quotes.

The attorneys and their firm were fined $5,000 by the courts and required to send letters to clients and to each judge who had been falsely attached to fake opinions. The case was dismissed, and the attorneys were sanctioned.

The mess could have been avoided had the attorneys fact-checked sources and cross-checked with other case studies before submitting the brief. Generative AI created citations that paralleled what legitimate legal briefs look like, without the right information.

This 2023 case was an early example of a growing trend. As of April 2026, more than 1,200 documented cases worldwide have ended in sanctioned attorneys for filling AI-generated evidence to the courts as evidence. Of those 1,200, roughly 800 cases are from the U.S. courts. That’s about 66% of all documented cases coming from the United States alone.

What AI does not do well, cont.

Financial Advisors' Case Study

In March 2024, the SEC charged two investment advisory firms with making false and misleading statements about their use of AI in marketing materials distributed to current and potential clients. One of the investment firms claimed that from 2019 to 2023, they were using AI for business purposes and in all of their marketing and communications. They claimed that their AI was able to predict which companies and trends were about to make it big and invest in them before anyone else could. None of this was true. The other firm claimed in 2023 to be the first regulated AI financial advisor. The company then marketed its platform as offering expert AI-driven forecasts. These claims weren't true either.

Because both companies were registered investment advisers and marketed these false claims to the public, they both experienced legal consequences. The first company paid $225,000 in civil penalties, and the second paid $175,000. Their combined total was $400,000.

The pattern both cases share

Because the AI writing looked authoritative, it was trusted without verification. Nobody fact-checked before its official submission to the intended audiences. The attorney team did not check if any of the citations were real. The firms didn't verify their marketing against their actual operations. When nobody catches the difference, the audience does. Some research calls this automation bias. The tendency to trust outputs from automated systems because they look polished and arrive quickly, rather than being verified.

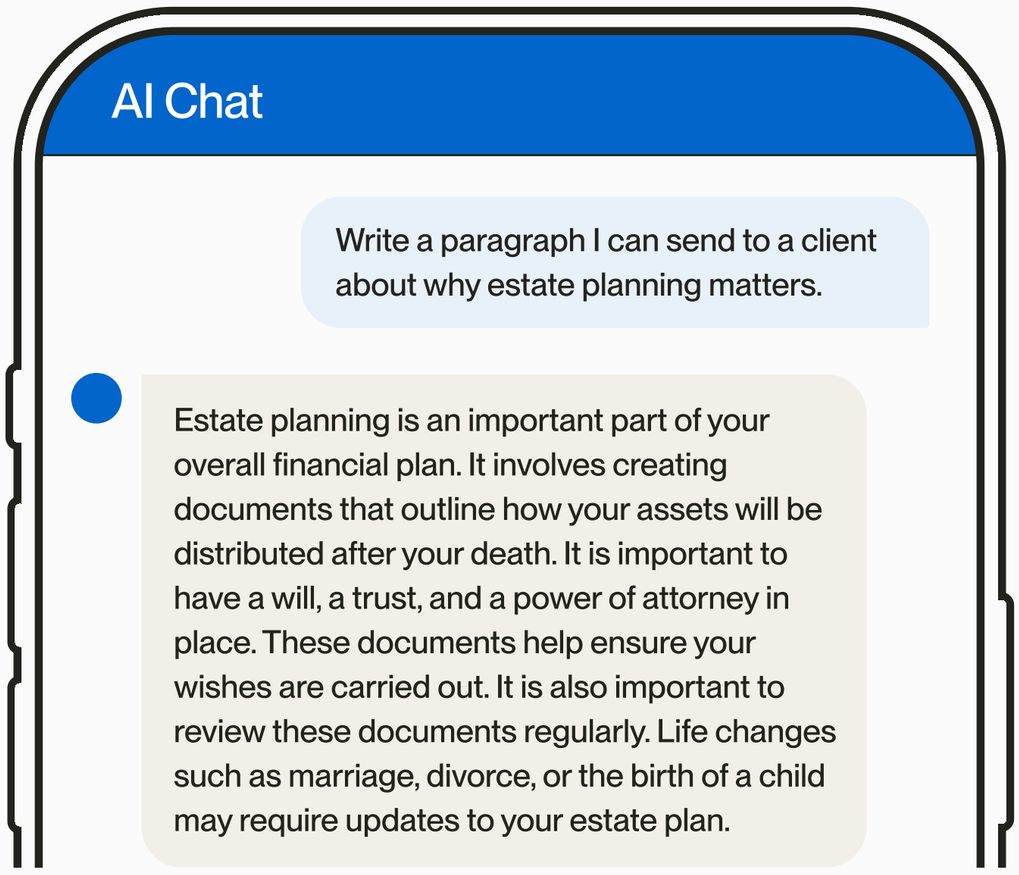
42.1% of advisors are expressing growing concern about AI compliance. They are starting to see how quickly AI can be treated as a quick solution that creates long-term problems when not addressed carefully. The CFP Board addressed this directly by reminding all financial planners that they are always responsible for all advice and guidance generated by AI. That is why fact-checking work before submitting or sharing it in communications, marketing, or with clients is not optional.

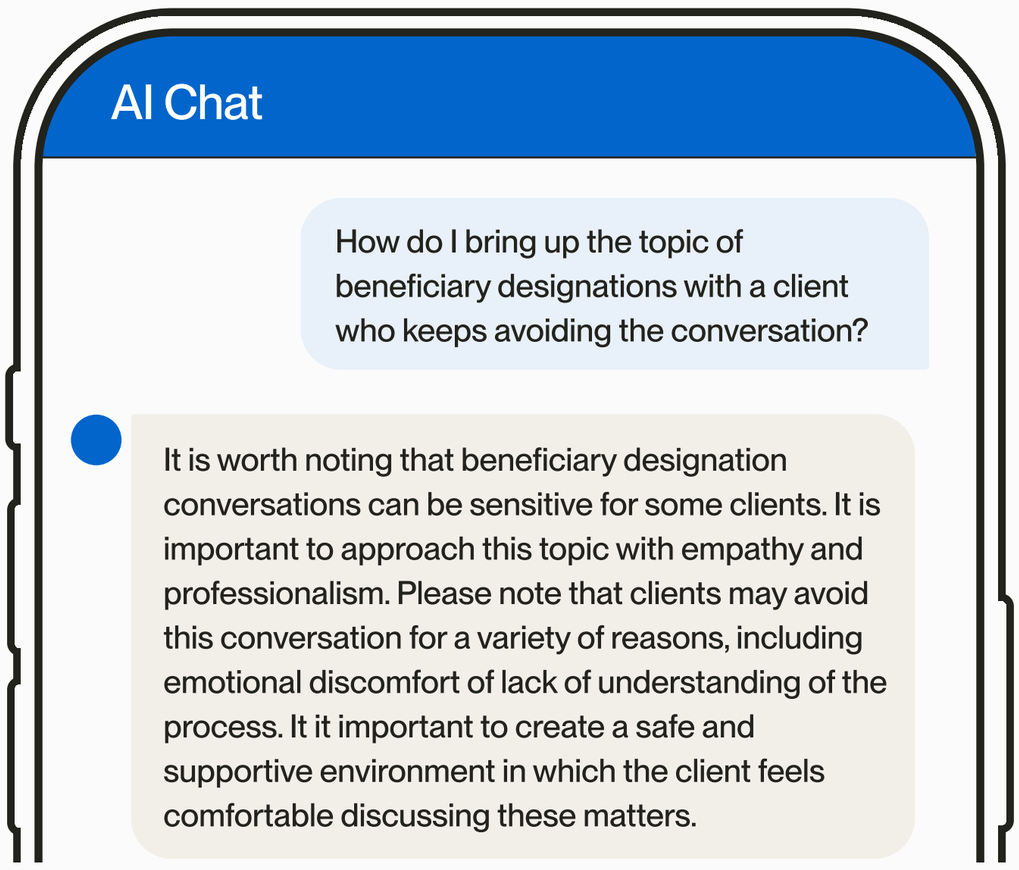
Section 04

What AI generated content looks like

Research from various universities and research institutions reaches the same finding. In one study, only 19% of humans could accurately identify AI-generated writing. Even those with additional training only slightly predicted AI writing better. There are patterns worth learning.

AI writing sounds flat. Human writing has natural variation, especially in storytelling. When a human is explaining a complex idea, the sentences typically get longer. When they want to make a sharp point, the sentence shrinks. AI writing typically doesn't have this variation. The sentences tend to be the same length. The ideas may repeat. Everything reads at the same pace because it was created at the computer's one pace operation.



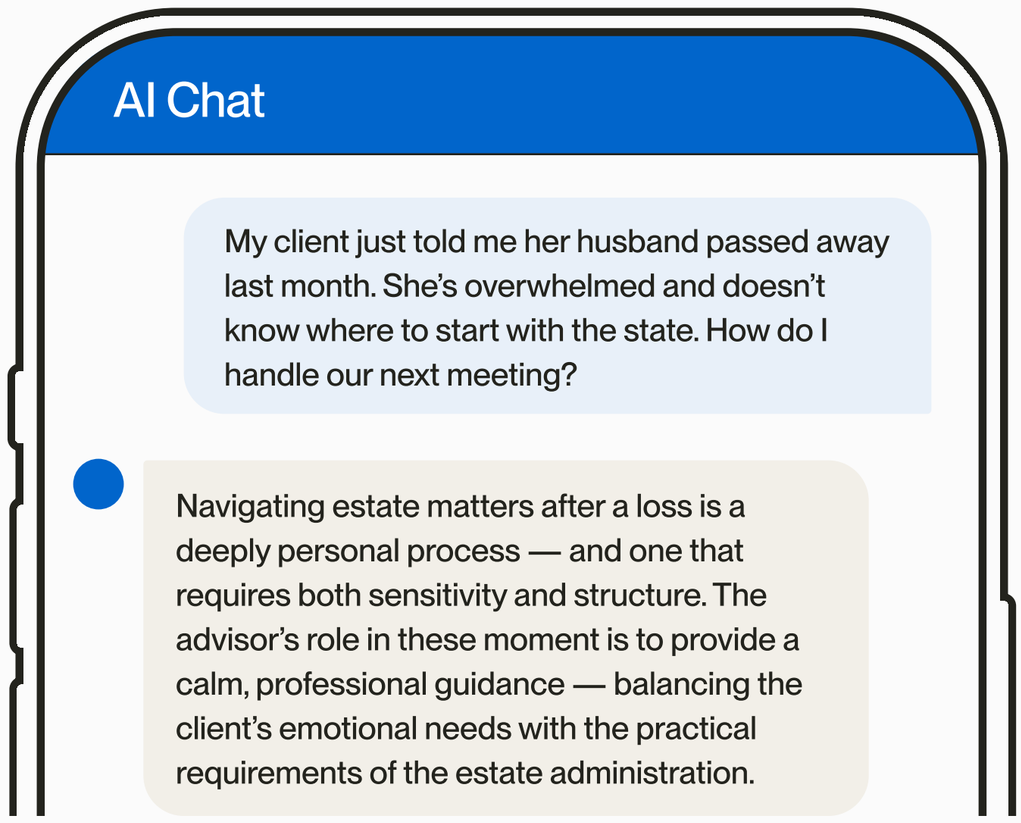


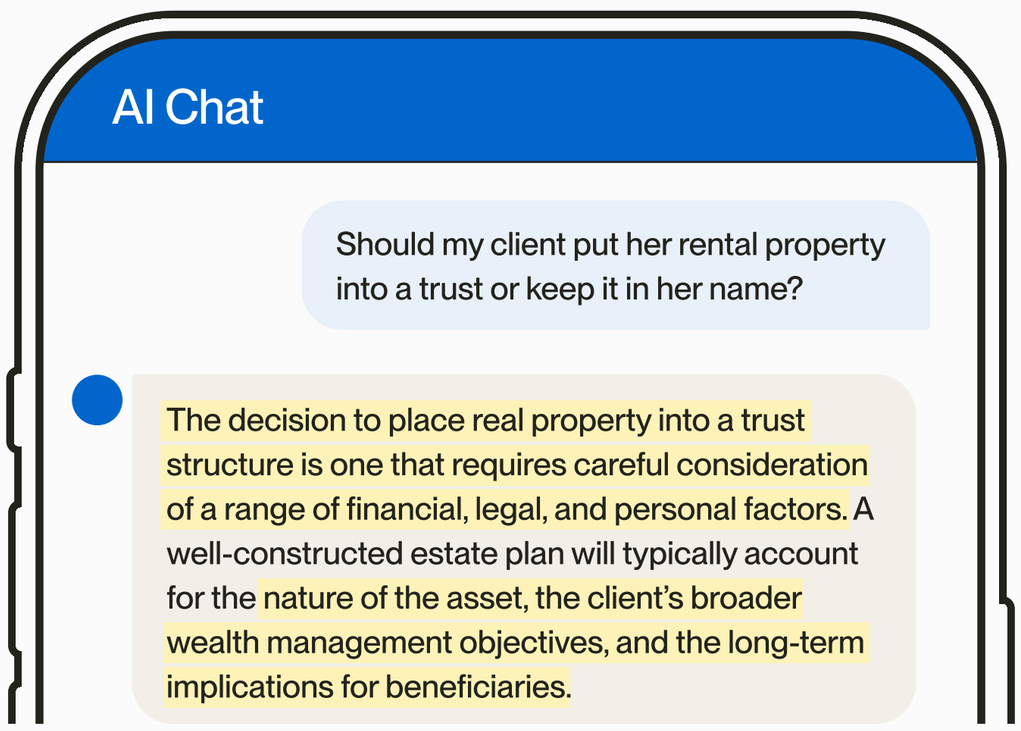
Researchers have also identified that AI-generated text leans toward formal language and avoids unexpected word choices. This can result in lengthy lists or formal concluding sentences. It states things without a perspective. Certain phrases recur constantly. They may show up as "it's worth noting," "please note," or "it is important to understand."

Section 04

What AI generated content looks like, cont.

Then the practical signs. The emdash used where a period belongs several times in a few paragraphs. The sentence that sounds meaningful but says nothing specific when read twice. The response that answers a slightly different question than the one asked. The communication that reads like a competent stranger wrote it rather than someone who knows this client.





The most important tell is what researchers call gloss. The appearance of substance without the substance itself. Authoritative language and correct vocabulary arranged into sentences that don't commit to anything specific.

The guiding principle is to slow down and question. Read the work as if you were about to sign a contract. Ask after each paragraph what it is actually saying. Can you summarize the point in one sentence? Or are there a lot of ideas jammed together without a clear conclusion?

Section 05

AI in estate planning (the relationship factor)

Overview

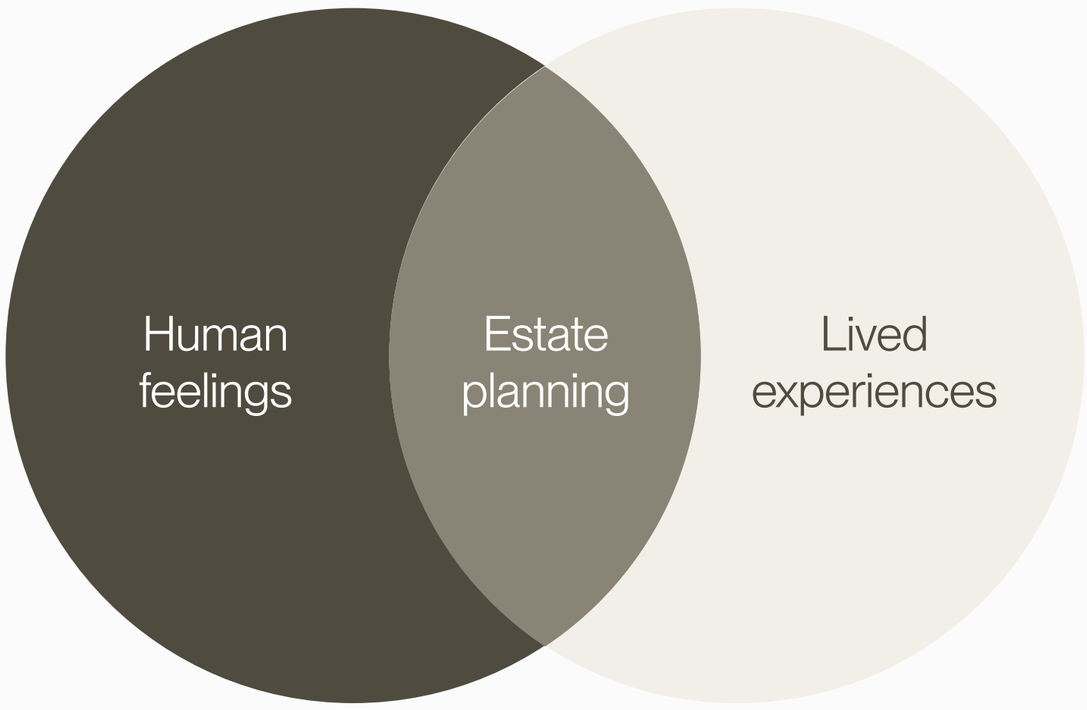
Estate planning is where the operational and human arguments in this report converge at the highest stakes. This section covers what clients are already doing with AI on their own, where AI does not belong in estate planning, and what the research points toward but has not yet fully answered about the human relationship at the center of this work.

Section 05 Objective

To show advisors why estate planning is relationship-led, what that means in practice, and why the gap in the research about communication and empathy is the most important question the profession has not yet answered.

Section 05

Estate planning as a relationship business



Estate planning sits at the intersection of real human feelings and experiences. Clients are thinking about how to care for their beneficiaries, what happens to what they built, and how to make sure the people they love are taken care of when they are gone. No other area of financial planning carries that weight, and no technology changes what that weight requires from the person sitting across from the client.

Estate planning has always been a business built around people. Human feeling and human strategy have to lead. Technology can improve the process and the experience. It cannot change the reality of what the conversation is actually about.

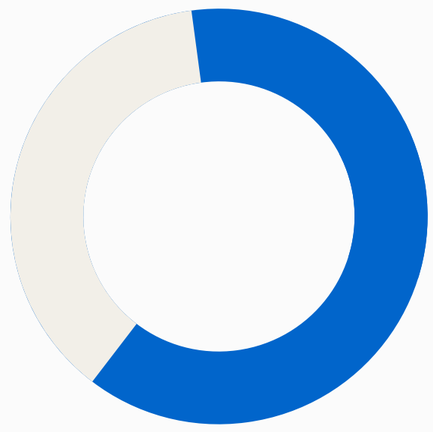
Clients are asking for a human-led, technology-supported experience. The research is consistent on what clients want from a financial advisor when the stakes are real. About 69% of Americans believe human advice is more powerful than any algorithm. Another 76% say technology can provide financial information but not judgment or trust. Then 61% say they want AI working alongside a human advisor for significant financial decisions, but they do not want AI to replace the advisor.

69%

of Americans believe human advice is more powerful than any algorithm

61%

of clients want AI to support human advisors, not replace them



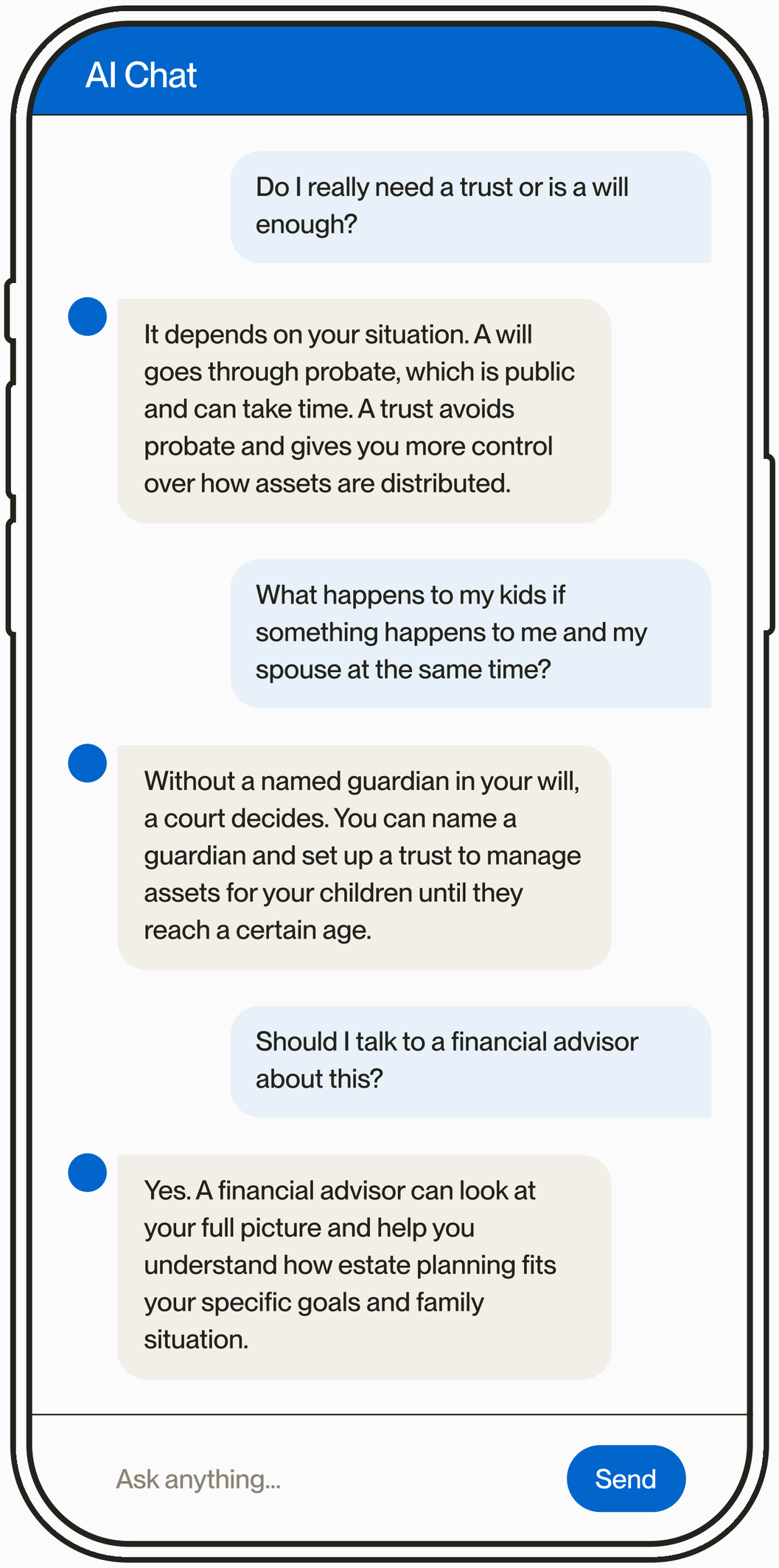
Section 05

Estate planning clients and AI

Clients are arriving at planning conversations having already consulted AI. About 2 out of 3 Americans have used AI for financial advice. That number rises to about 82% among Gen Z and millennials. Another 75% say AI lets them ask money questions they are too hesitant or embarrassed to ask a human. On top of those numbers, 85% of those individuals who received AI financial advice then acted on the recommendation.

Those numbers present real opportunities for advisors. The advisor who understands that clients are actively seeking advice doesn't need to compete with what the client found online. What they should do is complete it.

The client's situation requires detail, thoughtful intention, and judgment. They can explain, with context, why the answer the client received will impact their goals not only now but 10 years from now. This becomes a planning and educational experience the client was looking for. The client did some research. They came to the advisor for direction.



87% of financial advisors are actively learning how to incorporate AI into their daily operations.

Section 05

Estate planning clients and AI, cont.

An advisor can also use AI for their own research. One thing an advisor can do is use generative AI to surface the most commonly asked estate planning questions. Consider using prompts that include specific life stages, income levels, or family dynamics. The goal isn't to use AI to answer those questions but to meet clients where they are, help them discuss their concerns, reduce fears, and answer questions in the ways they can understand and in the ways they may already be asking them. The conversation in the room can shift to their specific needs and they can feel more comfortable.

Ask	→	Strategize	→	Move	→	Outcome
"Tell me about your family/ children." "How were finances talked about growing up?" "What worries you most?"		The answers shape the strategy: What this family needs, what they fear, what they want to protect.		The plan takes shape around that specific person. Not a template. A direction built from everything the relationship surfaced.		**3x** more likely to report greater happiness in money matters.

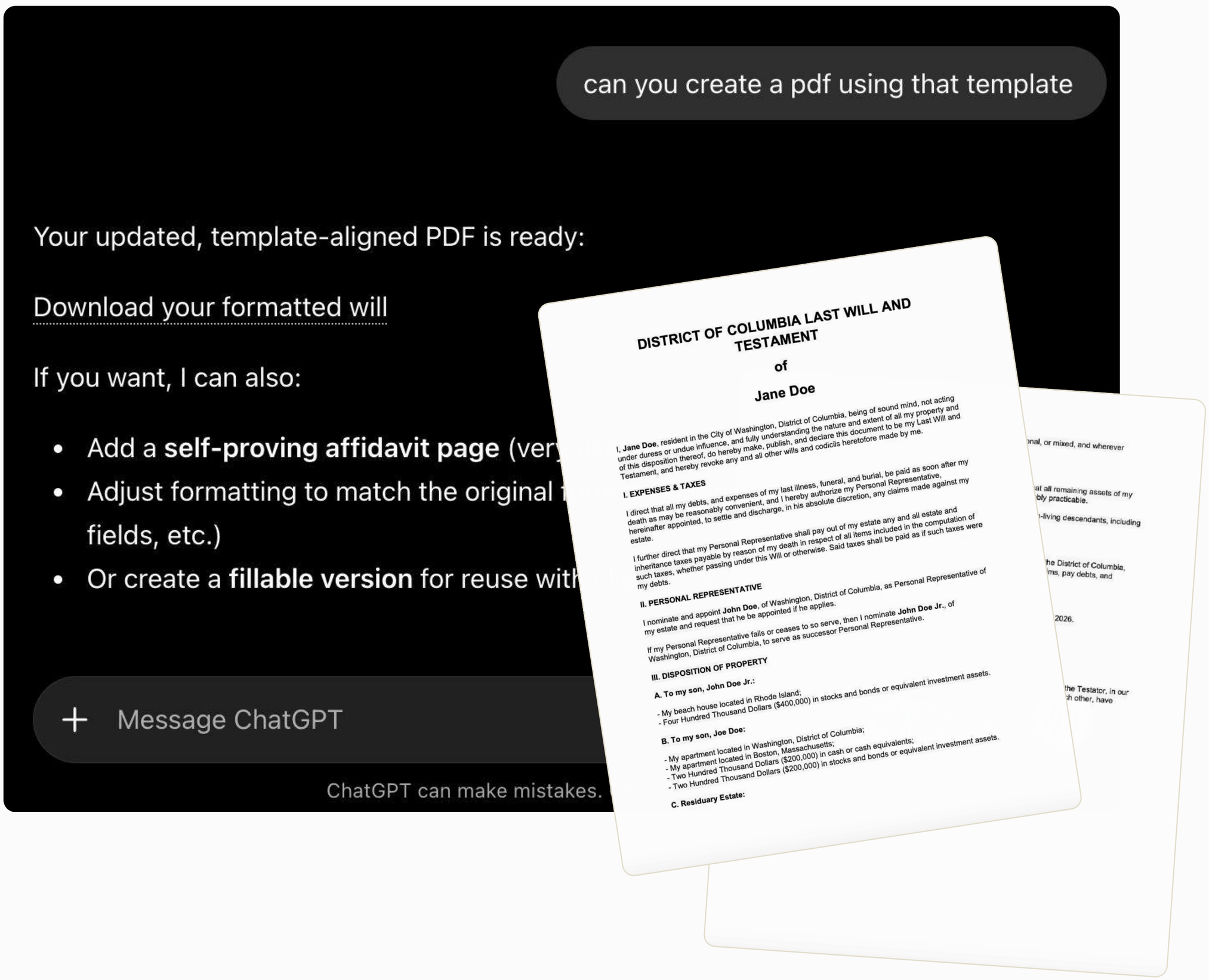
Americans with detailed financial plans are 3 times more likely to report greater happiness in money matters. A beneficial plan, specific to their needs and future, is the outcome. The advisor-client relationship is what asks, strategies, and moves the plan in the direction that's custom made for the person.

Section 05

Where AI breaks down in estate planning

The industry reports that AI has been used for DIY estate planning document generation and AI agentic platforms that eliminate attorney involvement (see ChatGPT example below). These are UPL concerns that undercut professionals with expertise.

What comes of AI-generated estate documents? A document that looks legitimate but isn't legally valid, state-compliant, or appropriate for the family's specific needs. It looks sound, but when the time comes where it's needed, it fails the person. By then it's too late to correct. The thing the family was trying to prevent has become the reality they have to live with.



Section 05

The unexpected truth

An astounding 99% of advisors believe that AI will play a significant role in the future of financial advice. Of those, only 6% currently use AI for financial planning. Advisors know that AI is key to their work but limit its use in the work that requires human accountability.

Over half of advisors, 53%, say that emotional intelligence is the top needed skill for their profession moving forward. Advisors know that AI has many computational capabilities, like data fluency and process management. Now they recognize that emotional intelligence is what is necessary to stay ahead.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to be aware of one's own emotions, thoughts, and reactions and to recognize those same feelings in others. They notice cues. They watch reactions. They know how to calm others in stressful situations, make more thoughtful decisions, and show empathy. These skills contribute to deeper connections and relationships with others.

The separation between what AI can do and what a human advisor can do is growing clearer. Advisors are leaning into the roles only they can fill. Growing relationships. Making thoughtful decisions. Showing genuine interest in clients. AI cannot think like an emotionally intelligent human who cares about another person. In this new era, advisors aren't competing with AI. They are developing the qualities that improve relationships in ways AI cannot reach.

Estate planning is relationship-led. That is the advisor's responsibility

THE UNEXPECTED TRUTH

99%

believe AI will play a significant role

6%

currently use AI for financial planning

THE ANSWER IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

53%

name emotional intelligence as the top skill going forward

EMPATHY

Reading what a client isn't saying

CALM UNDER PRESSURE

Preventing panic-driven decisions

BEHAVIORAL COACHING

Connecting goals to personal values

COMMUNICATION

Speaking in ways that land for each person

Section 05

The gap

The industry produces lots of data on AI adoption rates, governance frameworks, and compliance. It is also divided on what communication AI should be used in practice.

Often, communication is used as a blanket term. Sometimes it's used to explain marketing. Other times it's used for taking notes in meetings. It may be used to explain email summary features. These can be helpful uses for AI because it may reduce noise. However, these blanket statements are counterintuitive in this regard. And it shows in how the industry treats communication.

Advisors should have time with their clients, to educate, and plan for their specific needs. They need to communicate with these clients. The words they use, the stories they tell, the planning hypotheticals should resonate with humans. They are based on human experiences and feelings. It builds trust and relationships. **This is what we want.**

Although emotional intelligence is recognized as a fruitful and relationship-necessary component for advisors, the research is missing something. Our gap was the silence from those conversations (ironically) about what thoughtful communication now needs to look like in the advisor's office.

Communication in estate planning is not primarily an operational function. It becomes an art of care. It's the way **an advisor builds the client up so they can confidently articulate what they actually want for the people they love**.

It's the question that opens the conversation the client is avoiding out of fear. It's being present enough to notice when someone says and what they mean are not the same thing.

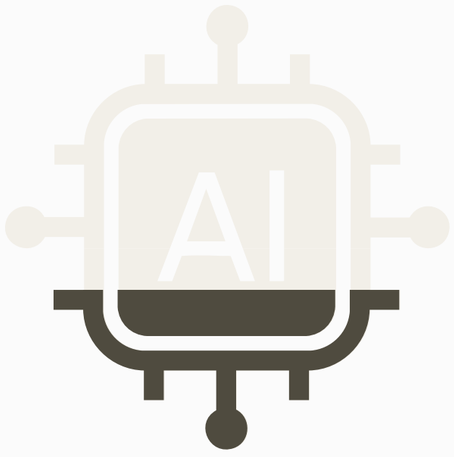
Communication serves two functions

1. **Administrative functions.** The reducing of noise like taking notes in meetings, summarizing emails, or drafting a follow-up email. These can be used for AI. Then relationship functions. These are the face-to-face interactions.
2. **Asking questions.** Building cases that deepen trust, and direct through human empathy and active listening.

Section 05

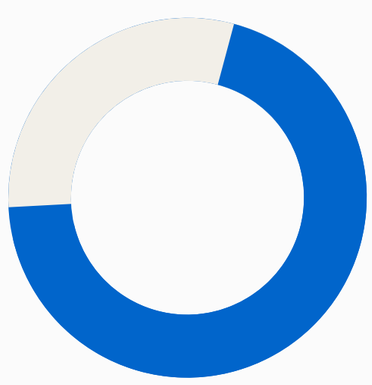
Choosing partners who understand the difference

Advisors understand that AI handles the operational layer while they lead with accountability and human judgment. Technology handles the noise. They replace the noise with meaningful interactions. They need platforms where attorneys are in the process, where documents are reviewed, where data is protected, and where technology exists to support the advisor relationship rather than replace it.



35%

of investors want to know how their advisors are using AI



70%

of ultra-high-net-worth clients cite data privacy as their primary concern

Around 35% of investors feel more comfortable with advisors who are transparent about when and how they use AI. Roughly 70% of ultra-high-net-worth clients cite data privacy as their primary concern. These are trust signals. Clients are watching how advisors handle technology. They are drawing conclusions about whether that advisor puts their interests first.

The advisors who earn that trust are the ones who choose platforms where attorneys are in the process, where documents are reviewed before they reach a family, where data is protected, and where the technology exists to support the relationship rather than replace it. **That is what our platform was built to do.**

We serve as a resource for advisors who believe that estate planning requires more than a document generator and more than a workflow tool. We value expertise-led experiences that require real conversations between clients, advisors, and attorneys. The relationship is the product. The technology is what makes more of those relationships possible.

Trust is not a feature. It is the outcome of every decision an advisor makes about how they work, who they work with, and what standard they hold their practice to. The advisors who understand that are already ahead. The technology just makes the distinction more visible.

About this report

This report is a research synthesis of current industry findings on artificial intelligence in financial services and estate planning. The research foundation of this report begins with over 65 sources published between 2023 and 2026, and grew exponentially the more we chose to offer.

We wanted to know what AI looks like in estate planning. Our guiding question was: “What is AI actually capable of in this space? Where does it belong? Where does it fall short?”

We chose to explore what already existed in research to make sense of the ever changing landscape and the many claims people have made. These sources were independent of each other and independent of us. We could see trends and patterns that led to more conclusive answers than a singular study conducted by one organization with a stake in that one outcome.

In addition to creating a more conclusive picture, we offer a practical reason for advisors. The information and research are out there. But the time and energy dedicated to finding it, connecting threads, and translating it into something actionable is often an identified gap, or a limit to taking sources from an academic or intimately technical lens to a practitioner application. We wanted to create something that made sense of the research but present it in a way that answered “so what do I do with this?” in practice.

The research quickly surfaced that these questions were not exclusive to estate planning or advisors. Frankly, there were large gaps in AI use for advisors. Our team needed to work from a larger research scope to create a clearer picture for our report.

Broadening our scope allowed our synthesis to reach four sectors:

- Technology and AI
- Legal
- Financial advisors
- Estate planning and technology

About this report, cont.

From these sectors, we gathered research that included:

- Surveys
- Summaries
- Executive reports
- Legal reviews and briefs

Although our scope was broad across industries, our methods for what we included had to meet specific requirements. As mentioned above, one requirement was limiting the time frame to be 2023-2026. This was an intentional decision by our team.

Prior to 2023, AI existed, but was seen more as a backend product. Then, 2023 marked a meaningful shift in research. AI had grown to a point where industries were researching and exploring AI options for implementation and strategic use. On the technology side, the same period reflects a significant expansion in AI capability and accessibility that allowed for business growth. Or in other words, as the technology capabilities grew, the more seriously industries were willing to research and adopt into practice.

Our team also used AI tools to build this report and test the same scope we were investigating for our readers. AI tools were used to gather research articles with our given parameters as well as for structural organization and editing. Every finding, framing decision, and editorial decision was made by our team. This same pattern reflects the new era of AI, technology, and human processing and holds up structurally. AI assists the process, but human decision-making leads.

Our process began with a guiding question, moved through the identification of research gaps across four sectors, and built toward a narrative arc that pulls the research into practical terms.

We intend for this research to serve as a primary resource for financial advisors navigating AI adoption and to help their clients navigate the intersection of estate planning, technology, but keeping human relationships at the center of it all.