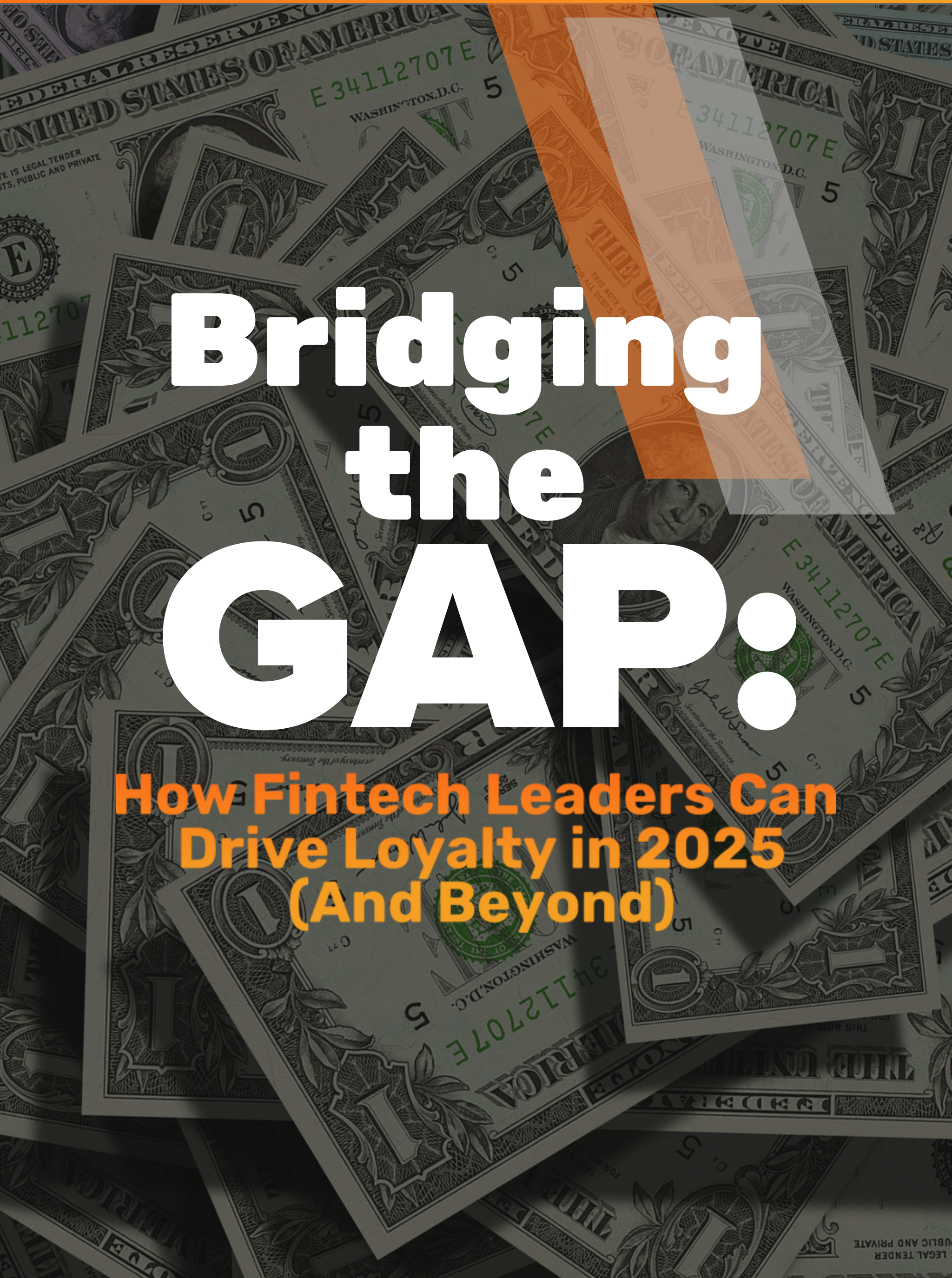
Kickstand



Bridging the GAP:

How Fintech Leaders Can Drive Loyalty in 2025 (And Beyond)

April is National Financial Literacy Month, AKA the perfect time to reflect on what it means to help consumers feel confident and in control of their finances.

Let's face it—money stress is universal. But here's the good news: you have the power to be the hero in your customers' stories. By fostering financial literacy, you can do more than just alleviate stress. You can build trust, deepen engagement, and drive brand growth in 2025 and beyond.

Kickstand surveyed over 600 consumers to examine perceptions around fintech, financial goals and barriers, and more to show how promoting financial literacy can unlock new opportunities for fintech brands.

We found that financial literacy is woefully lacking across the board. More than around one in three consumers (36%) said they're unsure how to begin saving for long-term goals like retirement. However, insufficient income isn't the only perpetrator here: confusion around investment options (47%) and a lack of financial education around retirement planning (42%) contribute massively to consumers' uncertainty.

A lack of literacy is holding people back from achieving true financial wellness. Let's dive into the key trends shaping consumer behavior, the current state of fintech, and how providers can close the gap with personalized education.

Unpacking financial wellness

Before we dive in, we first need to define the term "financial wellness." Unsurprisingly, this means something different to each and every one of us, especially on a generational level. Different generations bring unique priorities to their conceptualization of financial wellness. Here's what our data found:

How do you personally define "financial wellness"?

- Financial stability: Consistent income and expenses with minimal financial stress **(47%)**
- Financial security: Feeling prepared for emergencies or unforeseen expenses **(45%)**
- Financial freedom: Having enough wealth to make life choices without financial constraints **(42%)**
- Financial independence: The ability to support oneself without relying on others **(34%)**
- Debt freedom: Living without outstanding personal or consumer debt **(29%)**
    - Gen Z was **17%** more likely than average to say this
- Financial growth: Increasing personal wealth through investments and savings **(25%)**
- Work-life balance: Earning enough to spend time on personal and family priorities **(21%)**
- Retirement readiness: Saving enough to maintain quality of life in retirement **(19%)**
    - Boomers were **116%** more likely than average to say this
- Flexibility and choice: Being able to prioritize experiences over material possessions **(10%)**
- Homeownership: Achieving the milestone of owning a home **(9%)**
- Financial generosity: Having the resources to give back to family, friends, or causes **(7%)**
- Ethical financial practices: Aligning financial decisions with personal values, like sustainability **(4%)**
    - Gen Z was **75%** more likely than average to say this

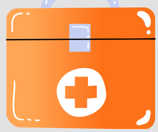
The wellness gap

While financial wellness is a priority for many, achieving it is easier said than done. Nearly two-thirds of consumers **(64%)** said they feel optimistic about their financial outlook in 2025, but **12%** still feel pessimistic. They cited stressors including, but not limited to:

- Rising debt **(90%)**
- Increasing costs of living **(74%)**
- Economic uncertainty **(68%)**
- The recent national election **(53%)**
- Stagnant or declining wages **(46%)**
- Job insecurity or fear of job loss **(44%)**

Another **24%** describe their financial situation as stable but stagnant—neither improving nor worsening—underscoring a gap between basic stability and true financial wellness.

SOS:
Fewer than
HALF



of American adults currently feel prepared to handle an unexpected financial crisis

But this gap isn't necessarily about income; it's caused by a variety of factors including access and preparedness. For example, **64%** of consumers say they lack access to affordable tools or advice to achieve their financial goals. And even when they can leverage these tools, many aren't confident in their ability to navigate topics like estate planning **(51%)**, retirement planning **(32%)**, and investing **(29%)**.

This lack of understanding is a major cause of financial stress, which impacts the decision-making of **78%** of consumers. Without education around important financial matters, consumers are more likely to make impulsive or delayed decisions, only serving to exacerbate existing challenges. With fewer than half of respondents **(49%)** saying they feel prepared to handle an unexpected financial crisis like a medical bill or job loss, there's an urgent need to improve financial literacy among consumers.

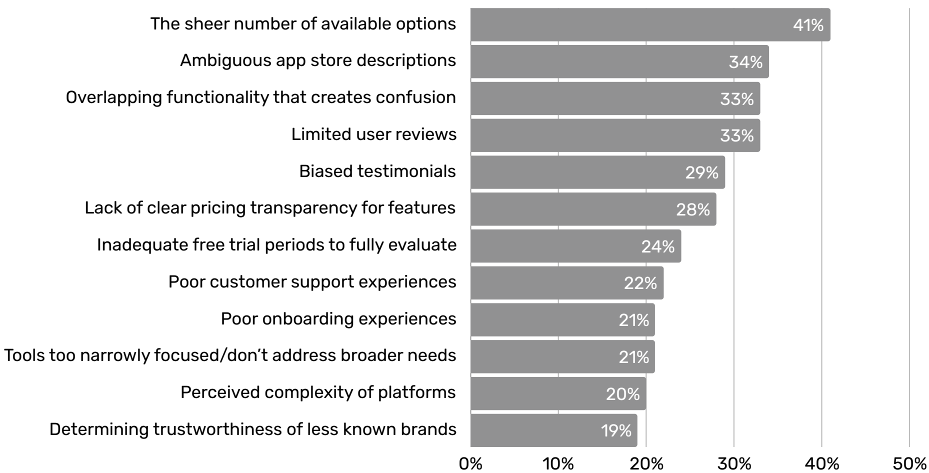
The financial toolbox: What consumers use and need

Consumers looking to gain control of their financial wellness are becoming increasingly reliant on digital tools. **70%** of respondents say they actively use tech solutions to manage their finances, including:

- Budgeting apps: **71%**
- Investment platforms: **70%**
- Savings tools: **42%**
- Debt management tools: **35%**
- Real-time financial coaching: **33%**

Their dependence on such tools isn't slowing down anytime soon: the vast majority of consumers report that their usage has either increased **(51%)** or remained stable **(40%)** since the start of 2024. But while these tools provide unprecedented convenience and control, they also come with their fair share of challenges.

Top Consumer Challenges Determining the Right Platform(s)



Fintech leaders should pay attention here: **28%** of consumers admitted they're only somewhat confident (or not confident at all) that they're using these tools effectively. They're struggling to understand the features or functionalities of their chosen tools **(28%)** and integrate the tech with their existing financial accounts **(34%)**. Another **29%** report concerns about data privacy.

They key to solving these woes? Personalized guidance–an asset **45%** of consumers currently lack. Addressing these pain points by streamlining the user experience, prioritizing transparency, and delivering tailored recommendations means fintech and finserv leaders can alleviate consumer frustration and position their brands as leaders in a competitive space.

Faith in fintech: Earning consumer confidence

It should go without saying that trust plays a critical role in shaping consumer loyalty. Over the past year, **30%** of consumers report an increase in their trust toward fintech platforms. The secret to their success?

- Enhanced data security measures **(42%)**
- Transparent communication about privacy policies **(38%)**
- Positive experiences with customer support **(38%)**
- Helpful brand content **(35%)**
- Consistent platform performance without technical issues **(35%)**
- Improved user interfaces and ease of navigation **(32%)**

However, trust in these tools remains fragile overall. **57%** of consumers said they're reluctant to heavily rely on fintech platforms due to fear of fraud or identity theft **(52%)**, data privacy risks **(51%)**, hidden fees or unclear cost structures **(39%)**, and more.

That means there's an immense opportunity for fintech and financial services leaders to educate their customers, both in regards to common financial anxieties and how their solutions mitigate them. Trust isn't built overnight; it's earned through consistent actions that align with customer expectations. Demonstrating a commitment to improving your customers' financial literacy is a surefire way to cultivate that.

Moreover, trust is not just a defensive strategy—it's a growth driver. **63%** of consumers are likely to recommend a fintech brand they trust to friends and family, and **85%** are willing to explore additional services from a provider that demonstrates transparency and reliability. For forward-thinking leaders, trust is the foundation on which to build deeper connections and sustained growth in 2025.

From fluff to function: Making personalization matter

Since there's no singular, clean cut definition of financial wellness, consumers increasingly expect financial solutions tailored to their unique needs. **79%** of respondents indicate they are more likely to stay loyal to brands that prioritize personalization.

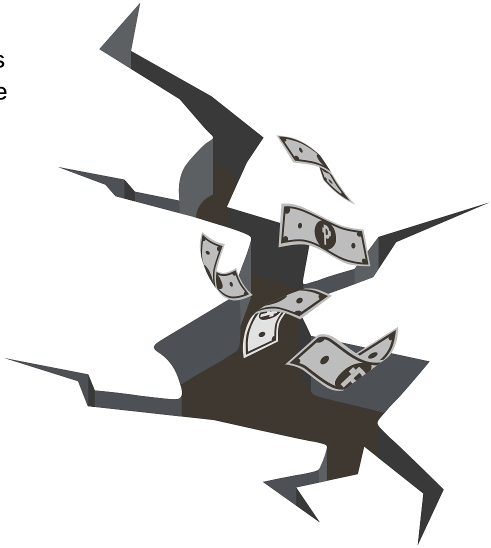
That said, not all personalization is created equal. Consumers draw a clear line between meaningful personalization that enhances their financial journey and superficial features that feel like "fluff." For example, **69%** of consumers perceive seeing their name on apps and/or dashboards as "gimmicky" in the absence of deeper personalization.

Here are some examples of what they're *actually* looking for:

- Personalized recommendations that align with their specific goals, such as saving for a home or planning for retirement **(63%)**
- Tools that flag potential risks, like overdrafts or credit score changes **(62%)**
- Personalized opportunities to save or invest **(59%)**
- Tools that allow them to set goals and track progress against them **(49%)**
- Customizable user experiences that allow them to prioritize their most-used features **(47%)**
- Targeted offers for things like loan refinancing or investment products that are relevant to their unique financial situation **(27%)**

Be careful here: personalization is a fine line to walk, and brands must ensure that they're providing real value. Otherwise, they run the risk of undermining their own credibility and irritating users. Notifications that are irrelevant **(84%)** or too frequent **(79%)** can leave people feeling annoyed, so don't overdo it.

Fixing the fault lines: Closing financial gaps



Even with support from their tech tools of choice, financial wellness isn't always within reach. Systemic barriers continue to challenge consumers across income levels and demographics.

Over a third of consumers **(37%)** told us they struggle with accessing the resources they need to achieve their financial goals. And there's no shortage of reasons why: high fees or minimum balance requirements **(46%)**; lack of access to affordable credit **(32%)**; and limited availability of culturally relevant financial products **(14%)** all emerged as common offenders.

But two of the biggest obstacles holding consumers back from reaching their financial goals? Difficulty finding trustworthy financial guidance **(46%)** and limited education about their financial options **(42%)**.

Consumers have a clear need for reliable, personalized education on the financial topics that matter most to them. In addition to tacking on flashy new features and functionalities, providers should examine how they can provide their users with meaningful guidance. Thoughtfully integrating financial education into digital platforms can help reduce knowledge gaps, enabling users to make more informed decisions. However, without building trust with users through the power of education, providers are doing their users (and their bottom line) a disservice.

Your customers need you

Financial literacy is more than a consumer aspiration—it's a strategic imperative for fintech and financial services leaders in 2025. This isn't just about helping consumers manage their money; it's about empowering them to thrive in a world where financial security, trust, and personalization are increasingly intertwined.

From bridging the wellness gap and simplifying tools to fostering trust and embracing meaningful personalization, the opportunities to lead are clear. By addressing systemic barriers and aligning with what financial wellness means to diverse audiences, companies can position themselves as **indispensable partners** in their customers' financial journeys.

About Kickstand

Kickstand is a global marketing agency specializing in support of high growth technology brands. Offering a data first approach to PR and services that include media and analyst relations, research, content, crisis communications, and influencer marketing, Kickstand helps build well-defended market leaders in some of today's most innovative industries including mobility, robotics, AI, cybersecurity, fintech, insurtech, supply chain and logistics, sales and marketing tech, and eCommerce. For more information about our approach and how we help brands scale and successfully exit, visit www.meetkickstand.com.

Survey Methodology

The *Bridging the Gap* survey was conducted between January 27 and February 28, 2025. Kickstand surveyed a total of 613 respondents in the United States who are over the age of 21. The study was conducted at 95% confidence with a +/- 4% margin of error.