# Navigating difficult conversations: the role of AI in financial advisory training



Difficult conversations are an inherent aspect of the financial advisory profession, presenting unique challenges for practitioners who must navigate sensitive topics including death, poor health, and inheritance. This complexity is further compounded for advisers who also manage teams, as they need to cultivate a productive environment while addressing issues with employees. The unpredictable nature of such conversations often leads to anxiety for those involved, prompting a search for tools to facilitate better communication.

In response to the difficulties faced in these scenarios, there is growing interest in the application of artificial intelligence (AI) training tools. One notable development is the introduction of RealTalk by the game-based simulation training company Attensi. This AI-powered role-playing solution employs agentic AI—capable of autonomous decision-making—to simulate challenging conversations in a safe, virtual environment. This innovation allows users to engage in realistic workplace scenarios that may include discussions with employees or training in sales techniques.

Research conducted by Attensi highlights a significant demand for this training, revealing that 75% of employees have experienced anxiety linked to difficult workplace conversations. Furthermore, 72% expressed a desire for training in managing these challenging interactions. Many employees, especially those from younger generations, indicated a preference for AI-driven role-play training over traditional face-to-face sessions with managers. However, Attensi has clarified that RealTalk is intended to complement, rather than replace, existing training methods.

Speaking to Money Marketing, Attensi’s creative director, Justin Blanchard, acknowledged the stakes involved in conversations that could have serious ramifications. He noted the importance of building confidence among managers when navigating these discussions, stating, “But role-playing in front of other people can be humiliating if you get it wrong. So, we have built a system, a safe space for people to learn how to have difficult conversations.” The AI characters in RealTalk are specifically designed to recreate the unpredictability of real-life interactions, presenting participants with challenges such as a busy, distracted individual.

Commentary from industry leaders reflects growing support for AI's role in enhancing training. James Tucker, chief executive of Twenty7tec, indicated that AI has a valuable role in fostering confidence and an awareness of complex issues that advisers may face. He underscored, however, the need for maintaining the human element in training, noting, “AI cannot account for every scenario or customer type, which is why shop-floor shadowing is important for both senior and junior advisers and should still be prioritised.”

Further philosophical questions about the potential limits of AI in financial advisement were raised by Ian McKenna, founder of FTRC and a longstanding technology columnist. He drew attention to the Turing test, a measure of a machine's ability to exhibit human-like reasoning, and pondered whether it would ever be feasible to train an AI to effectively handle nuanced sales objections regarding financial products. McKenna expressed caution, suggesting, “There is a very clear line I would not want to cross in terms of being excessive in the sales process,” proposing instead that AI might better serve to assist advisers in refining their sales strategies rather than wholly replacing human interaction.

The financial advice sector is currently navigating a landscape in which emerging technologies, like AI, promise to alter traditional business practices. The ongoing integration of these tools raises essential considerations regarding their impact on communication, training, and overall business efficacy within diverse organisational contexts.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)