**The 2013 PROFIT & LOSS DIGITAL FX AWARDS**

“Eye on the Client”

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**P&L’s One to Watch in 2013**

**P&L Report Card**

We can keep this fairly brief as much of what there is to discuss has already been written. This award is very much aimed at the banks we feel are positioning themselves for a major advance over the coming 12 months, normally having put the foundations in place over the past two years.

Recently mentioned is JP Morgan and, as the Editor’s Choice Award lays out, the bank has created a visually rich experience and is in the throes of pulling everything together on the new technology framework. BNP Paribas also has to be mentioned here although given the speed of the bank’s advance over the past year it is hard to believe it can maintain that pace. BNP does have a couple of major project rollouts planned, mainly to fill a couple of gaps in its product suite and thus should continue to garner attention. Certainly as the bank adds user friendly functionality to the platform it will be less reliant upon super-tight pricing.

It may be a little early given the development cycle, but the Royal Bank of Scotland has some very interesting plans, mostly aimed at creating the type of flexible platform necessary to support the evolving needs of its clients in such a fluid regulatory environment. Equally, Lloyds Bank is in the midst of a development program to match the significant resource outlay on human capital over the past year or two.

It is probably here that we make our annual mention of the ‘sleeping giant’ that is HSBC! The bank has developed, as we shall discuss later, an excellent FX prime brokerage platform. If it takes the same ground up approach to a client facing trading platform it will be a significant force (although we saw nothing to suggest it will be in the next 12 months).

**Winner – UBS**

There is only one winner of course, given how much attention we have already lavished on UBS’s Neo platform.

Neo is clearly an ambitious project given how it has had to get the buy in from so many areas of the business, but a year after we first mentioned it, it is really taking shape – and we like what we see: It is a cross asset class platform that solves what has been a growing problem for UBS in recent years – too many access points to too many technology frameworks.

Effectively, UBS has created a branding experience that brings together all of the bank’s skills and services into one place through the creation of what it is best accurate to describe as a personal network. Everything starts with the powerful search functionality at the top of the screen, where a keyword provides the client with all relevant information regarding that keyword, including contact details (click to call/email) for all the relevant UBS personnel.

Everything on the platform is about the click through experience – a client likes the idea in a piece of research or dealing desk buzz, they can either click to contact the person responsible to get more details, or open a deal ticket and execute the idea. They can also share the idea or piece of research with their own network of people (they can have different networks for different areas or products).

Interestingly, the information is not shared via Bloomberg or Reuters messaging, or by email, it is shared on the platform, which is something that should make clients stickier and also help to build the number of viewers. This social networking experience extends to content providers, clients can opt to “follow” a particular person or group of people to be instantly alerted any time they contribute to the platform.

Another thing we liked about Neo is the really cleaned up GUI, this has made what could be a morass of information very easy to navigate – and perhaps the most important thing about platforms is that clients don’t get bogged down looking for a needle in a haystack. The cleanliness of the GUI is helped by the use of tabs, in turn the platform offers different Apps and views of markets.

The bank is currently beta testing or in the process of going live with much of the execution functionality on Neo, but again all has been built to the same specifications and the trading experience in FX at least is a good one, with good graphics and information in the dealing tile.

Completing the front-to-back experience of Neo, the platform also has UBS’s portfolio and analysis services embedded, and key among the changes is more use of colour on blotters, which blend voice and ‘e’ trades.

In terms of what is coming to Neo, the bank continues to work on some details, for example in FX it will be providing “tear off” capabilities to free up desktop real estate. Equally UBS’ new suite of algo products, which have been developed along with the bank’s equities teams, will be rolled out later this year on Neo. The TCA functionality that comes with algo execution will also sit within Neo, where its social networking advantages should come to the fore.

Neo is another platform built using a blend of Flex and HTML5 – for the moment at least that appears to be the technology of choice for most institutions in development mode. Just as we were excited by the coming to fruition of Deutsche’s App Market last year, so this year we look forward to the full roll out of Neo. This is a big year for UBS which has struggled with its platform for three or four years, for it marks the bank’s return to prominence. Neo also needs to be right, because the budget is unlikely to be available for a Neo 2!

That said, we think the platform will be a triumph that uses the most up-to-date technology and techniques to ensure that as much, or as little, information is put into the hands of the customer – and that that customer can share, act upon or save that information however they want. We have been a little sceptical in the past about social media and financial markets, Neo shows how it can – and should – be done. UBS is back.

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