

# Technology Solutions for a Digital-First News Organisation

September 2023 | Webinar

# A warm welcome from and an introduction to today's facilitators for this exclusive, live webinar

**George Montagu**



Senior Manager, Head of  
Insights, FT Strategies

**Lindsey Jayne**



Chief Product Officer,  
Financial Times

## This session will cover four areas related to technology solutions for news organisations, concluding with a Q&A

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1. Technology's role in building a coherent, robust strategy
  2. Components of a purpose-fit technology stack
  3. Evaluating build vs buy decisions
  4. Wider capabilities required to unlock benefits from technology
  5. Q&A with Lindsey & George
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# STRATEGIES

A growth consultancy that helps media organisations transform their business and create sustainable value



Deepening and broadening audiences' engagement with your content and wider proposition



Monetising your offering to create and accelerate scalable recurring revenue streams



Driving organisational transformation using our proven North Star methodology



# We have helped 500+ organisations, in publishing and beyond, address their most pressing challenges

Example clients:

DERSTANDARD

BOF  
The Business of Fashion

Penguin  
Random  
House

Google

moneycontrol

秋田新報 電子版

THE TIMES OF INDIA

DAILY MAVERICK

ADWEEK

H KAΘMEPINH

la Repubblica

Nation Media Group  
Media of Africa for Africa

THE KEN

沖縄  
タイムス

EL PAÍS

vocento

THE WEEK

京都新聞

DER SPIEGEL

RCS  
MEDIAGROUP

THE HINDU

EL MUNDO

PORSCHE

The INDEPENDENT

中國新聞 デジタル

euronews.

DENIK  
N

BONNIER

DC THOMSON

LA CROIX

"I am so grateful for the work we have done together over the past few months - it has been a tremendous learning experience. You have put us on such a strong path for success."



Juliette Morris  
Former CEO  
Adweek

"We were enjoying the ride without really stopping to think. FT Strategies has given us the opportunity to look inwards, give us direction and guidance to take forward."



Binoy Prabhakar  
Editor  
Moneycontrol

"The project has accelerated our digital transition. We've put that strategy at the heart of how we future-proof our business."



Steve Barron  
Publishing Director  
Inverness Courier

# Our services include a range of best-in-class technology related offerings to enable clients to accelerate their digital growth

## Capability requirements analysis

Determining technology capabilities required to achieve an overarching strategy, and clarifying the sequencing and timeline for solution implementation

## Use case design and build

Identifying use cases for technology adoption and building prototypes to address business opportunities and challenges, and designing a roadmap for implementation

## Business case development

Developing robust, objective business cases to secure buy-in and investment from relevant decision makers to implement new technology solutions

## Vendor selection

Evaluating and selecting appropriate vendors through comprehensive due diligence for the adoption of new solutions for identified technology capabilities

## Operating model refinement

Optimising current structures, processes, and governance to integrate and maximise the value of technology solutions

## Thought leadership creation

Creating in-depth white papers and industry reports based on thorough research relating to key technology topics, trends, and challenges

# We've recently supported many publishers design technology capabilities to meet the demands of a sophisticated digital-first news organisation

**Built a new operating model to accelerate transition to digital**



East and Central African multimedia news conglomerate

**Designed a technology stack to revitalise digital growth**



Leading UK regional daily newspaper

**Identified new tech and talent capabilities to deliver an ambitious vision**



Italian specialist business news publication

**Outlined new tech capabilities and planned implementation readiness**



Digital-first daily Greek news publication





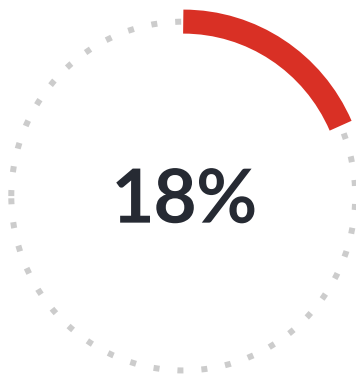
# Technology's role in building a coherent, robust strategy

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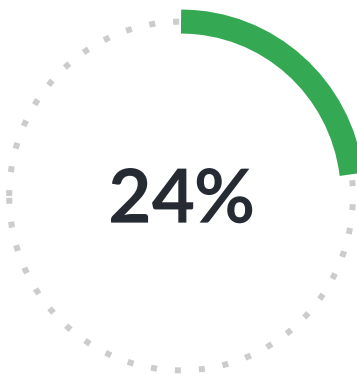
# Publishers recognise the importance of technology for digital growth, but commonly underinvest

Publishers underinvest in technology and rarely know which specific solutions are best



the percentage of costs allocated to technology amongst the least performant news organisations<sup>1</sup>

However, with appropriate investment, tech can be a valuable differentiator

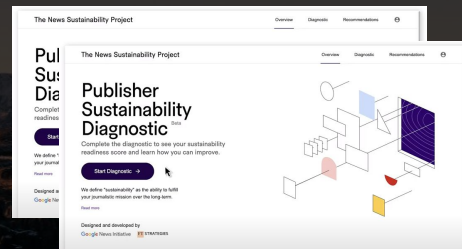


the percentage of costs allocated to technology amongst the top 20% performant news organisations<sup>1</sup>

Photo by [Pascal Debrunner](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Source: (1) [FT Strategies & GNI - The News Sustainability Project](#)

## News Sustainability Project

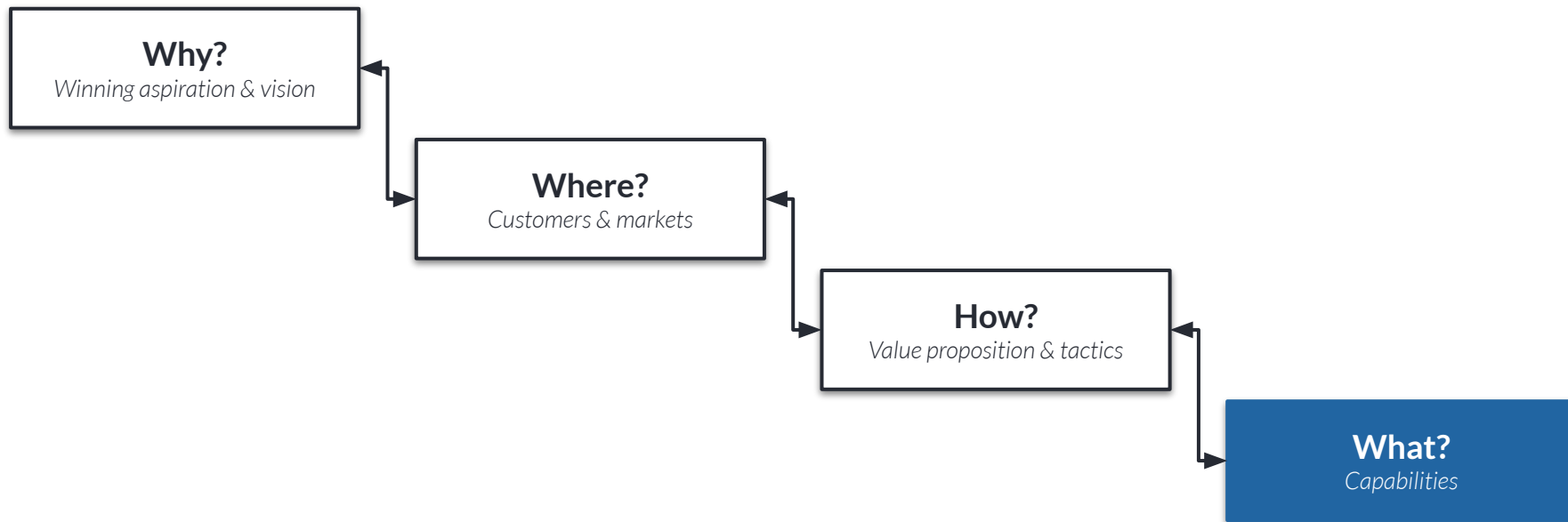


*These insights are derived from a tool co-created by FT Strategies and the Google News Initiative, following an 18-month research project involving 400+ publishers. The tool is designed to help news organisations assess their commercial sustainability.*

*Based on a detailed publisher diagnostic, the tool provides tailored recommendations on several aspects, including technology, to strengthen future sustainability.*

**[news-sustainability-project.com](https://news-sustainability-project.com)**

# Technology is part of the distinctive capabilities an organisation needs to deliver its offerings to target audiences in order to achieve its vision



*A robust, coherent strategy is a reinforcing 'cascade' of the four choices outlined above*



# Components of a purpose-fit technology stack

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# A mature digital-first news organisation needs to perform a series of crucial operations

## Create

*Develop and refine digital content such as videos, podcasts, and written editorial outputs*

## Distribute

*Share created content on digital platforms including websites and apps to reach target audiences*

## Reach & Engage

*Engage audiences through personalised communications and marketing campaigns across various digital channels and platforms, including email and social media*

## Monetise & Manage

*Collect and maintain consumer data, and generate revenue from audiences for accessing and consuming digital content*

## Digital Enablers

*The supporting infrastructure that underpin many of the operations of a digital-first newsroom*

### Tech Solutions Handbook



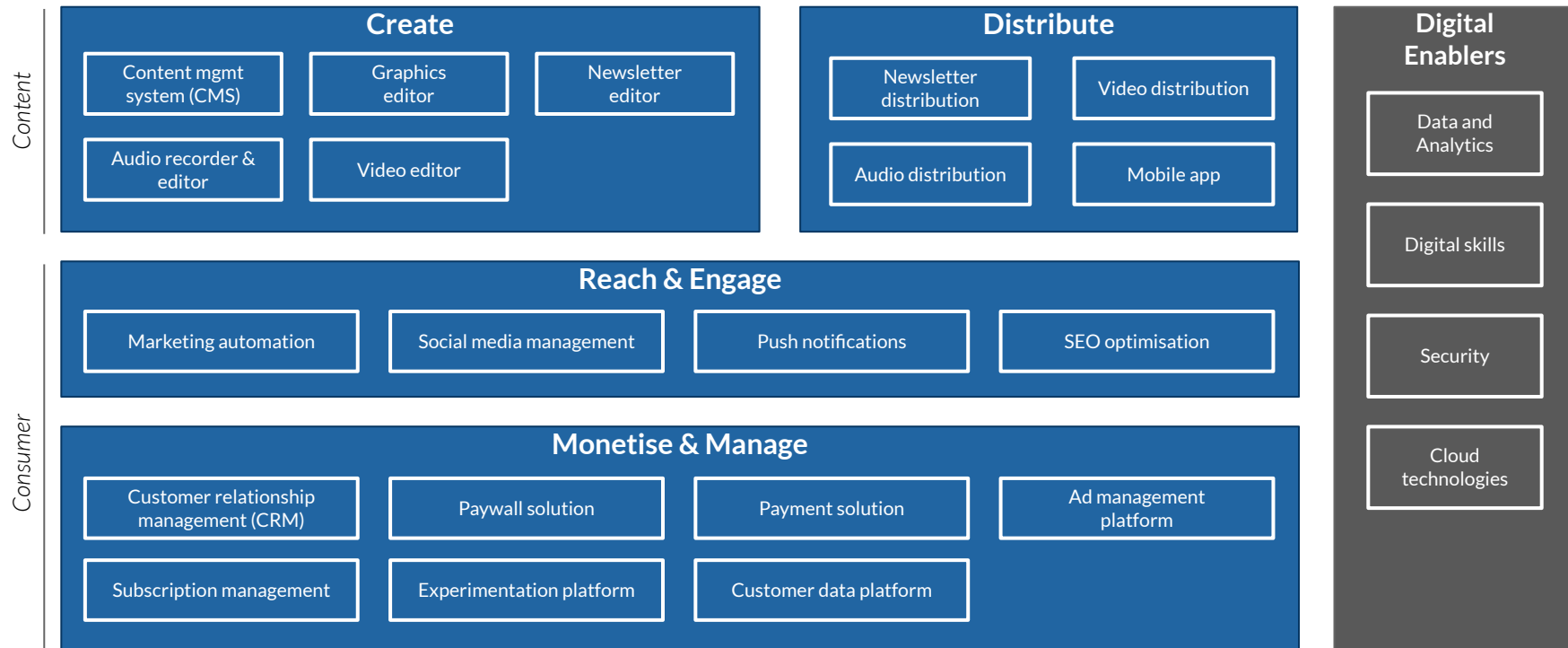
*FT Strategies has produced an exclusive how-to guide outlining the essential technology solutions required to effectively run a successful digital-first news organisation*

*Further details on accessing this document can be found here:*

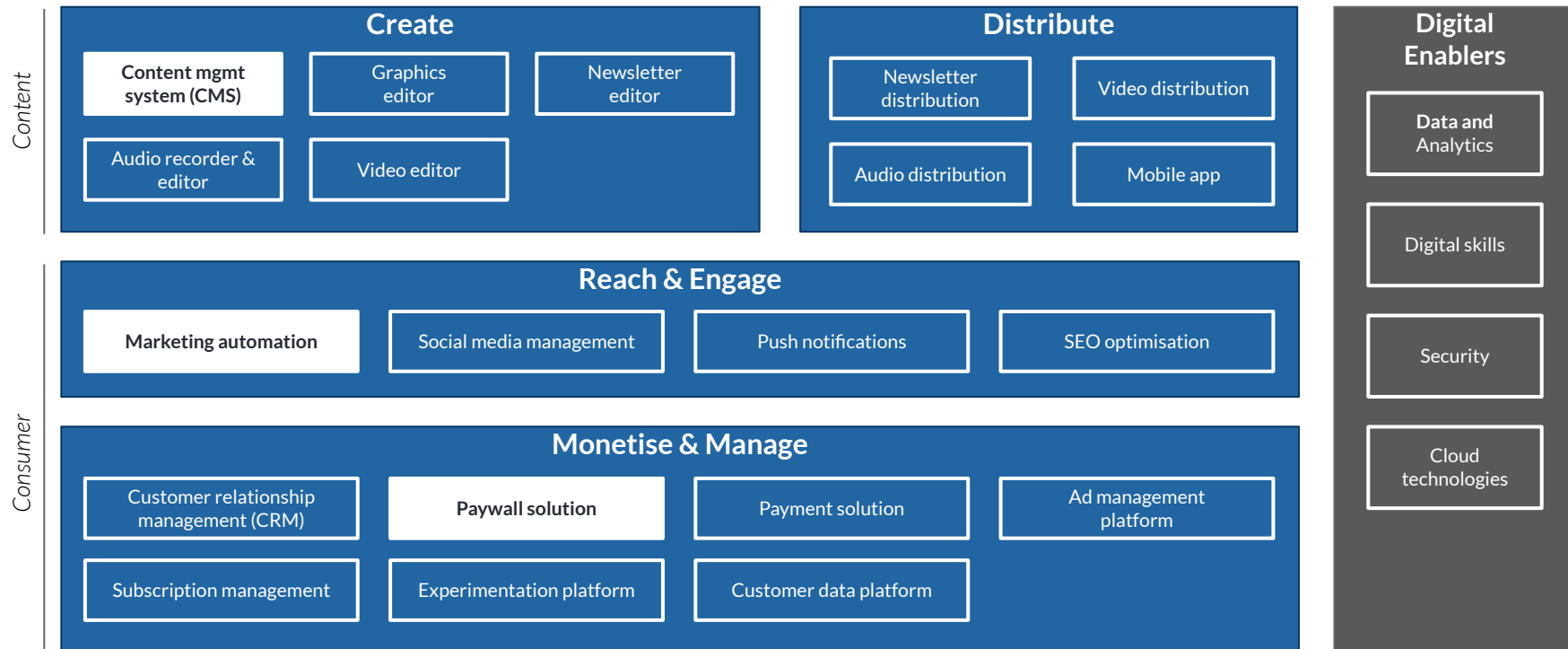
<https://www.ftstrategies.com/en-gb/insights/technology-solutions-how-to-guide/>



# A range of underpinning technology solutions should be leveraged to effectively support and deliver each operation



## Several innovations have occurred across many of these solutions to aid publishers in transitioning to digital-first and to fuel growth



# There are two main schools of thought when it comes to developing this type of tech: combined, point solutions or a single, integrated stack

*Please note the vendors outlined on this slide are purely for illustrative purposes as possible examples and do not constitute FTS recommendations*

## SINGLE, INTEGRATED SOLUTION

Out of the box technology solutions delivering multi-functionality and requiring limited tech implementation and ongoing maintenance support

EXAMPLES



Newspack



*Suitable for early to mid stage publishers or those constrained for investment and resources*

## COMBINED, POINT SOLUTIONS

Advanced solutions providing best-in-class features and functionality, stitched together to underpin a publisher's operations

EXAMPLES



*Suitable for sophisticated, mature publishers with healthy capital and product & tech resources*

Increasing scale and sophistication



# Evaluating decision on whether to build vs buy

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# There is no one-size-fits-all approach when deciding on whether to build or buy, and these choices should be guided by a publisher's context

*Approaches to address technology gaps*



## Build

- **Exclusive access is required** as the capability enables a distinct competitive advantage
- There is **availability of skilled talent in-house** to both build and maintain solutions at an acceptable cost point
- There are **unique requirements** unfulfilled by vendors and greater control over feature development is needed
- Greater **flexibility is needed to integrate the solution** into an already sophisticated tech stack



## Buy

- The required **solution is commoditised** and unlikely to be a source of competitive advantage
- The solution is **easily accessible** from a range of reliable, proven external vendors
- The solution needs to be **deployed quickly** to augment existing offerings or to optimise internal processes
- There is a need for external support to **implement and manage** the technology solutions

# The FT has struck a delicate balance in building and buying solutions to support commercial objectives; several leading assets have been built

## CONTENT ANALYTICS DASHBOARD: LANTERN



Simple, user-friendly dashboard to provide journalists with content performance data, focusing on the metrics most crucial to support key commercial objectives (i.e. engagement)

## CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: SPARK

Headline	Byline	Modified	Status	Active Editors	Desk	Publication	Guide Notes
Letter: Dollar's global hegemony holds the key to stopping US debt		7 Aug 2023, 12:28m	Draft		Features	TARGET 7 Aug 2023	
Letter: Existing storage sites can be used to curb emissions		7 Aug 2023, 15:18m	Draft		Features	TARGET 7 Aug 2023	
Letter: AI-generated creative content requires a label		7 Aug 2023, 10:05m	Draft		Features	TARGET 7 Aug 2023	
Letter: New oil licences and Paris shadow are not compatible		7 Aug 2023, 15:18m	Draft		Features	TARGET 7 Aug 2023	
Letter: Community groups also face de-banking problems		7 Aug 2023, 15:12m	Draft		Features	TARGET 7 Aug 2023	
Letter: Halfhearted managers have succumbed to groupthink		7 Aug 2023, 15:18m	Draft		Features	TARGET 7 Aug 2023	
Letter: We can't have our cake and eat it with carbon		7 Aug 2023, 10:35m	Complete		Features	PUBLISHED 7 Aug 2023, 10:35m	
Letter: The BoE needs its 'reluctance' earnings		7 Aug 2023, 10:35m	Complete		Features	PUBLISHED 7 Aug 2023, 10:35m	
Letter: Ground zero for fossil fuels		7 Aug 2023, 10:35m	Complete		Features	PUBLISHED 7 Aug 2023, 10:35m	
Berkshire Hathaway, lucky or good?	Robert Armstrong	7 Aug 2023, 12:28m	Draft		Newsletters	SCHEDULED 7 Aug 2023, 6:30am	
Live news: The week ahead	William Langley	7 Aug 2023, 12:05am	Complete		Breaking news	PUBLISHED 7 Aug 2023, 12:05am	

Bespoke CMS comprising digital-first workflows to enable journalists to easily create and publish stories, while integrating effectively with our other newsroom tools and solutions



# Wider capabilities to unlock benefits from technology

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## Establish the right wider capabilities, including people and process, to maximise the value from technology solutions adopted (1/2)



**People**

- Upskill current employees to harness existing and new solutions
- Address additional talent gaps via outsourcing or hiring in skilled labour
- Use technology to augment existing workflows



## Establish the right wider capabilities, including people and process, to maximise the value from technology solutions adopted (2/2)



### People

- Upskill current employees to harness existing and new solutions
- Address additional talent gaps via outsourcing or hiring in skilled labour
- Use technology to augment existing workflows



### Process

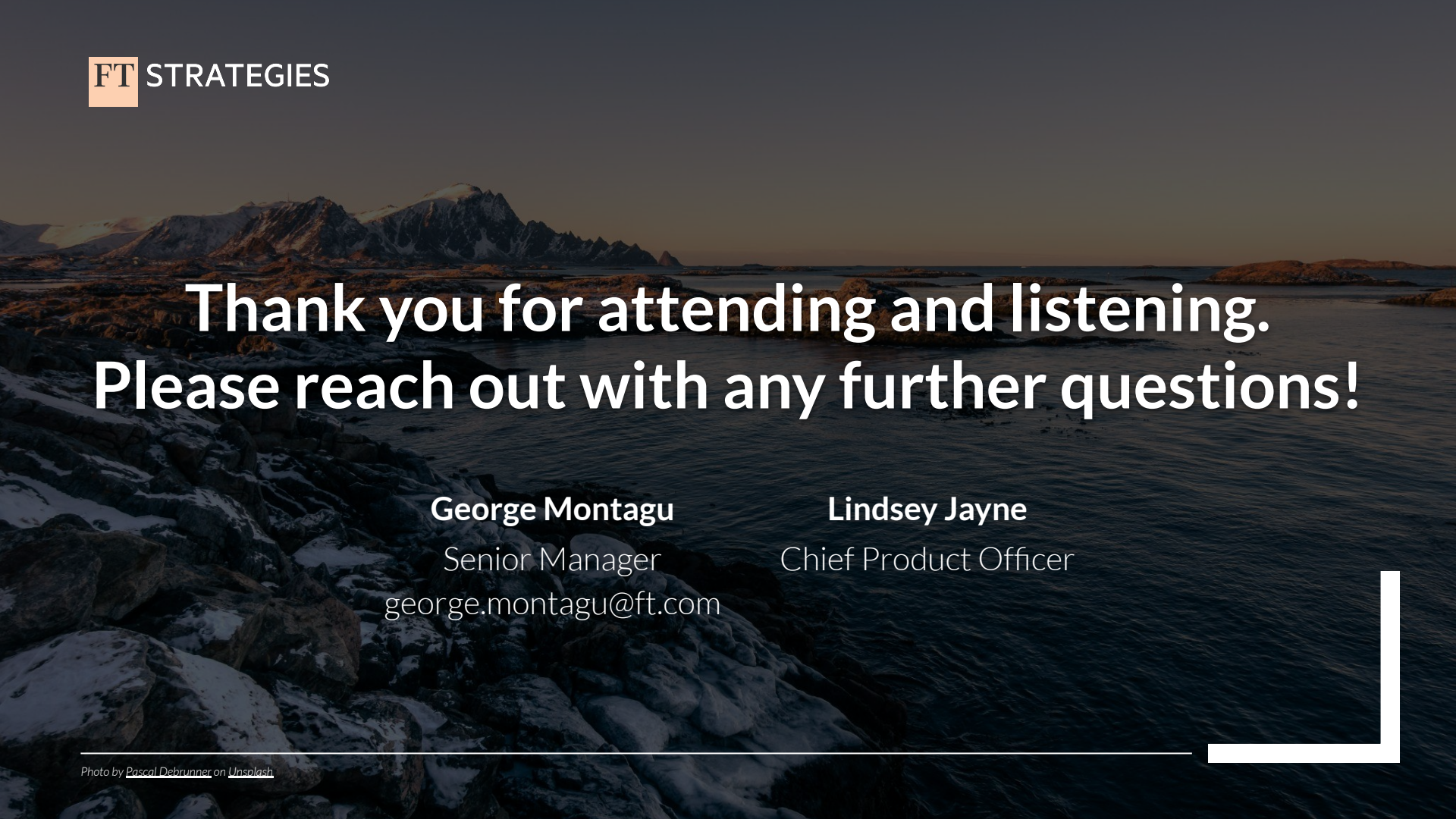
- Establish a structured, robust approach to build or buy new solutions
- Build a culture that fosters test and learn, embracing failure along the way
- Break down organisational silos and align stakeholders around new solutions
- Apply rigorous due diligence when forming partnerships with vendors



# Q&A with Lindsey & George

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*Please place your questions in the chat*

A scenic photograph of a rugged, snow-capped mountain range in the background, with a calm body of water in the middle ground and a rocky, snow-dusted shoreline in the foreground. The sky is a soft, hazy blue.

**Thank you for attending and listening.  
Please reach out with any further questions!**

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**Lindsey Jayne**

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