The Capability Imperative

Why consultative capability has become a commercial advantage in Australian fund distribution

An evidence-based briefing for senior distribution leaders | 2026

Australian funds management is operating in a different distribution environment now. The adviser population is smaller, the advice businesses that remain are more commercially sophisticated, and product-led conversations are delivering less strategic value than they once did.

At the same time, the size of the prize has continued to grow. Total superannuation assets reached approximately $4.1 trillion at 30 September 2024, reinforcing the scale of capital competing for effective distribution access.

The implication is straightforward: when relationships matter more, the quality of the commercial conversation matters more too.

<16,000	$4.1T	Rising ETF adoption
Practising financial advisers across 2024–25, based on public industry trackers and sector data	Total superannuation assets in Australia at 30 September 2024	Passive and low-cost investment options continue to intensify product competition

A distribution model built for a different market

Many fund managers still rely on a playbook shaped by a more transactional era: regular check-ins, polished presentations, performance updates, and high product fluency. Those things still matter, but on their own they are no longer enough to differentiate a distribution team in the Australian advice market.

Advisers do not need more people who can explain a fund deck. They need external partners who understand how advice businesses grow, where they are operationally constrained, and what makes a commercial conversation genuinely useful.

What has changed

The benchmark is no longer whether a BDM is responsive and well informed. The benchmark is whether they can improve the quality of the adviser's thinking and contribute meaningfully to the adviser's business conversation.

Why this matters commercially

Relationship quality has commercial consequences because it shapes share of mind, responsiveness to opportunity, platform perception, and the durability of intermediary relationships.

In a market with fewer advisers and more competition for attention, weak conversations create drag. They slow momentum after the initial meeting, reduce the value of follow-up contact, and make the relationship easier to displace when a competitor shows up with a stronger commercial lens.

The commercial risk

When a distribution conversation remains heavily product-led, even strong propositions can lose traction. In many cases, the issue is not the quality of the product. It is the depth and usefulness of the conversation around it.

The capability gap hiding in plain sight

For many distribution leaders, the issue is not effort. It is that capable, hardworking people have not been systematically developed to hold higher-value commercial conversations.

In practice, that gap usually shows up in familiar ways: meetings that stay too close to product, discovery that does not go deep enough, value propositions that feel generic, and managers who review activity without truly coaching behaviour.

What this means for Taylor Healey

This is the part of the problem Taylor Healey is built to address. The work is not generic sales training repackaged for financial services; it is behavioural and skill-based capability development designed specifically for BDMs and sales leaders operating in complex financial-services distribution environments.

What the market now needs	What Taylor Healey builds
BDMs who understand practice dynamics, not just products	Consultative selling capability that shifts the conversation from product explanation to business relevance
More substantive and commercially useful meetings	Discovery and questioning techniques that create depth, clarity and forward movement in meetings
Value that feels specific to the client, not generic to the market	Sharper value proposition development tailored to client context and commercial priorities
Greater confidence in complex or resistant conversations	Negotiation and influence skills suited to investment, platform and solution-based discussions
Leaders who coach capability, not just monitor activity	Sales coaching for leaders so behavioural change becomes embedded, practical and measurable

A useful question for distribution leaders

When your BDMs or relationship managers meet with advisers, how much of the conversation is about your products, and how much is about the adviser’s business? If the answer leans heavily toward the former, there is a good chance the team is operating in the gap this paper describes.

The conversation worth having

The most commercially interesting fund managers are not relying on product quality alone. They are investing in the quality of the conversations their distribution teams are able to lead.

That is where behavioural change work matters: not as a soft add-on, and not as a generic training exercise, but as a way to build sharper commercial capability in the part of the organisation that lives closest to revenue, influence and relationship momentum.

For firms seeing stalled conversations, slower conversion, or strong products failing to create the expected traction, this is the conversation worth having.

Research base

This briefing draws on recent industry research and commentary including Adviser Ratings' 2025 Australian Financial Advice Landscape work, APRA's September 2024 superannuation statistics, industry adviser-count tracking, Money Management reporting on the evolving adviser–BDM relationship, and market commentary on changing distribution capability requirements.

Success KPIs

A simple framework for measuring capability change in practice

The strongest capability programs do not stop at workshop delivery. They define a small number of practical indicators that show whether behaviour is changing, leadership is reinforcing it, and the commercial conversation is improving.

KPI	What it measures	What good looks like	Why it matters
Commercially substantive meetings	Share of meetings where discussion extends beyond product updates into adviser business issues and priorities	Clear upward trend within 90 days	Shows whether conversations are becoming more relevant and strategic
First-to-second meeting conversion	Percentage of priority opportunities that progress beyond initial contact	Improvement against baseline over 3–6 months	Indicates better conversations are creating stronger momentum
Priority opportunity progression	Movement of the most important opportunities through agreed sales stages	More priority opportunities moving with purpose	Keeps focus on commercial quality, not just volume
Leader coaching cadence	Frequency and quality of leader-led coaching against real opportunities and observed behaviours	Regular monthly or fortnightly rhythm	Capability change rarely sticks without line-leader reinforcement
Value proposition quality	Consistency and specificity of how BDMs link the proposition to client context	Better meeting prep, articulation and follow-up quality	Reduces generic messaging and lifts relevance
Relationship depth in target segments	Strength of engagement with priority adviser groups, wealth firms or key accounts	Broader and deeper access into target practices	Measures whether capability is helping the team win attention where it matters most

A practical rule

Use a balanced set of measures. One KPI should track behaviour, one should track leader reinforcement, and one should track commercial movement in the pipeline. Keep it simple.

That creates a more credible picture than relying on activity counts alone.

These measures are intended to be tailored to each client's sales motion, channel structure and revenue model.