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## Platform satisfaction slips in 2009

### Advisers demand improvements

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Overall satisfaction with the main platforms slipped in 2009 as financial planners remained willing to change platforms when they encountered problems or where functionality lagged the industry, according to new research.

Advisers who rated main platforms as "average" rose to 22 per cent in 2009 from 20 per cent in 2008, data from Investment Trends showed.

Planners who rated main platforms as "very good" dropped to 14 per cent in 2009 from 17 per cent a year earlier.

Advisers who rated main platforms as "good" remained stable at 60 per cent.

"At times, consumers can confuse the performance of their platform with the performance of their portfolio and given that portfolios on average have underperformed against their expectations in the last couple of years, that may have a negative contagion impact on the performance of their platform," Colonial First State general manager of distribution Paul Barrett said.

Investment Trends research showed 28 per cent of planners eliminated using one or more platforms in the 12 months to August, compared with 31 per cent in the year to October 2008.

The biggest reasons for leaving a platform included administration and processing errors, poor service/support, better platforms at competitors, limited investment menus and fees deemed excessive for low balance clients.

In terms of what improvements and features advisers want from platforms, nearly 60 per cent would like the ability to transfer funds without triggering capital gains tax.

The ability to transfer direct equities onto platforms, integration of risk and planning software and superior client reporting functionality were also among the main features and improvements advisers wanted from platforms.

On average advisers used three platforms each, the data showed.

The research showed 27 per cent of financial planning practices used Westpac-owned platforms. That is the highest figure in the industry and up from 25 per cent in 2008.

The use of platforms owned by Commonwealth Bank of Australia, IOOF Group and AMP also rose in 2009.

The use of platforms owned by Macquarie Group, National Australia Bank (including Aviva), Perpetual and Skandia slipped in 2009.

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