**Independent Banker**

**December 2024**

**Columns**

**[tag] From the Top**

**[hed] The heart of the community bank**

[quote] “I’m realizing that every community bank is a best place to work. We put people first and challenge ourselves to grow for the betterment of our teams, customers and communities, and we stand apart from all other employers.”

[body]

This year’s list of Best Community Banks to Work For made me think about what it takes to be a great employer. No two community banks are exactly alike, but we share a common sense of purpose, a focus on relationship banking and a dedication to our roles—and those three elements boil down to caring about people.

As employers, community banks thrive because we put people first. Sure, we have to meet budget and achieve revenue goals, but at the end of the day, we care about people more. We focus on building relationships with our teams, customers and communities more than on maximizing profits.

**[subhed] A culture of caring**

This innate sense of connection drives community bank cultures. I look at my bank and see an environment that celebrates family, offers a collegial, playful atmosphere and encourages people to work hard *<i>and<i>* have fun while they do it. That lighthearted spirit is palpable in everything we do.

Of course, it’s not all play, but when you value your team as individuals, not cogs in the banking wheel, they enjoy it that much more. Many businesses had to force their teams back to the office after COVID remote work, but members of our team asked to come back because they missed their colleagues. I imagine that many of you can say the same.

**[subhed] Evolving to meet needs**

That’s all because we care about balancing the work of community banking with the people behind it. We don’t want to be stagnant; we want to provide a flourishing environment that sparks enthusiasm from our employees and drives business engagement. From the board and leadership to every individual employee, it takes dedication and passion to enable our banks to grow, adapt and transform, and an enthusiastic, engaged team equals success in today’s environment.

Reflecting on all of this, I’m realizing that every community bank is a best place to work. We put people first and challenge ourselves to grow for the betterment of our teams, customers and communities, and we stand apart from all other employers. I’m proud to be a community banker, not just for the work that we do but for the lives we touch. It’s a true honor.

On a personal note, this holiday season, I hope you’ll make the time to wind down, connect with loved ones and be truly present for those in your life. Because work will always be here, and after all, isn’t it the people who make the difference?

[ends]

*[sidebar] My top 3*

The holidays bring with them family traditions, including these personal favorites:

1. Seeing our Christmas tree lit up at night
2. Opening presents early in the morning with spiced tea
3. Making eggs benedict while having a mimosa