Independent Banker

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Portfolio

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**[hed] Banking and staffing Gen Z into the future**

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As Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) graduates into the full-time workforce, they are looking to community banks as financial partners as well as potential employers. The characteristics this demographic seeks in both kinds of relationship are consistent: They want personal connection and digital solutions. Fortunately, that technology-forward, relationship banking model is community banks’ sweet spot.

When it comes to identifying a financial partner, research shows Gen Z values a personalized banking relationship. In fact, according to a Capco study, 75% rated personalization as “highly important,” making it a significant differentiator and opportunity for community banks.

In addition, Gen Zers are digitally influenced. They place much more emphasis on [mobile banking](https://www.fiserv.com/en/insights/articles-and-blogs/banking-for-the-next-generation.html) than other generations; Fiserv notes that 56% of them cite it as their top priority when selecting a primary financial institution.

These numbers tell a story and give community banks clear direction: Digital solutions and a personalized experience matter. That’s one reason ICBA brought Rego Payments, a white-labeled family digital wallet for financial institutions and their customers, into the latest ThinkTECH Accelerator cohort. Rego gives community banks a platform to create a continuum of services that progress experiences from teenagers to senior citizens with a curated journey.

But this journey also needs to apply to Gen Z as employees. Community banks need to consider how this generation will support them from a staffing perspective. Thankfully, the customer of the future and the employee of the future are not dissimilar. Both are digital natives, tech-forward and tech-enabled, and with a high-tech, high-touch model, community banks are well positioned to establish themselves in a desirable place to lead the financial needs of this generation.

As the competitive job market continues, offering a work environment that speaks to Gen Z’s core needs will draw them in as employees. Community banks already share values with this generation by offering a community-centric, local-based approach to banking. A recent study from American Student Assistance reported that one-third of Gen Z would define a successful career by the ability to help their community—which bodes well for community banks as employers.

So, as we move into the new year, do so with optimism about what your future holds. Your digitally supported, personal relationship banking model resonates more than ever, solidifying you in the minds and hearts of current and future generations. And as 2024 winds down, I hope you take the time to reflect on your successes and look forward to what’s to come, because community banks are poised to lead financial services in the new year. In the meantime, have a very happy holiday season!

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