



# Technology AND Personal Service: Community Banking's Advantage in Investment Services

Making additional financial tools available, such as brokerage services, trust and investment services, insurance products and retirement planning, can help build stronger relationships between the community bank and customer while also providing added incentives for new customers.

For banks that are not already doing so, at least some of these non-traditional product offerings could be a welcome component of their overall marketing strategy. The average customer has a significant portion of their savings in investment products, and they typically regard their brokerage provider as a trusted advisor. Who better to compete in this marketplace than you, their trusted community banker? Providing direct and immediate access to investment and insurance

services through multiple delivery channels helps community banks stay competitive and address the needs of a greater number of customers.

Obviously, almost any bank offers many or all of these services, but community banks have the significant advantage of trusted, personalized relationships. Many customers are turned off by the overly aggressive nature of some financial institutions.

If community banks are to compete and continue to thrive, effective marketing and promotion are essential. It is critical for banks to brand, position and create top-of-mind awareness of their products and services among existing and prospective customers, in order to differentiate themselves from competitors. Effective marketing

will also enhance the investment program's credibility, ensuring a productive foray into new endeavors.

The integration of products and services and the utilization of knowledgeable customer service representatives who have been adequately cross-trained helps assure that opportunities to meet customer needs are identified and properly addressed. Relationships, more than any one factor, build and maintain business goals.

But a strong and knowledgeable staff can't perform effectively without competitive technological capabilities to support it. Linking brokerage and banking transactions together to accomplish automated or on-demand real-time transfers of money demonstrates that

customers' expectations of a fully integrated product offering can easily be met.

Customer access to an online integrated view of their investment and bank accounts makes it easy and convenient to get the information that matters most. It positions the investment products alongside the banking products, so that the customer has the best of both worlds: the trusted relationship of the community bank with state-of-the-art transaction capability, information and access.

Cutting-edge technologies such as those available through Sorrento Pacific Financial present opportunities to capture entrenched banking customers now versus later, and gain an increased "share of wallet" from existing customers in addition to establishing new

ones. For a minimal investment, community banks can position themselves as being in the technology forefront and use that advantage to grow their customer base.

Adapting a multi-channel delivery model presents an excellent opportunity for banks to broaden their demographic appeal by attracting new and younger customers earlier in their financial life cycles and retaining them as customers longer. Community banks can position themselves to appeal to this segment by developing online, face-to-face, direct mail and call center applications across all product and service sectors. By working with strategic partners like Sorrento Pacific Financial that offer innovative and well-integrated solutions, you can be positioned to offer better value and access to the customers than competing institutions. ■

SPF is a full-service financial broker-dealer and registered investment advisor offering services to ICBA members nationwide. For more information contact Bill Reid at bill.reid@icba.org or please call Rick Dahl at 858-805-7910 or email info@mybd.com (Member FINRA/SIPC).

**NETWORK NEWS' MISTAKES**  
In the fall 2007 issue of Network News, the article *True Fiscal Fitness Requires Working All of Your Muscles* was incorrectly attributed to Bill Reid of ICBA Financial Services. The author of the article was Ron Sirt, Senior Vice President, Howe Barnes Hoefler & Arnett, Member SIPC.