

The strength of the Paladin value proposition is its unwavering focus on reducing Core and IT costs for community financial institutions. We don't sell advice. We deliver real solutions. In fact, so unusual is our mission and our expertise that the first reaction of many of our clients is disbelief, skepticism. Can you really do this? What's the catch? What are you selling here? Will you come in here and make an enemy out of our current vendor? Does saving money mean cutting back on our services or switching vendors?

You may have some of the same questions. We encourage them. Here are some we hear most often. Take a look at our answers.

So, what is Paladin fs?

Built on a foundation of research and armed with our proprietary Blue Book of vendor contract, pricing, and market data, we are the hard-hitting negotiator standing up to the Core and IT banking oligopoly to secure better business terms and pricing for community financial institutions, while ensuring win-win deals for financial institutions and vendors alike. Saving an average of \$1.26 million per client engagement, we not only persuade Core and IT providers to eliminate thousands of unfair, one-sided business terms in their current contracts, but also protect the institution from ever overpaying or signing a bad deal again.

Launched in 2007 with the goal of leveling the playing field for community financial institutions, our clarity of purpose, market intelligence, and a seasoned team of experts have catapulted us into recognition as a formidable force in the industry of successful vendor and merger negotiations. With a laser focus on negotiations, we are free from distractions and able to stand up to the Core and IT banking oligopoly to ensure better terms and pricing for financial institutions all across the U.S.

Who is on the Paladin team?

Boasting more than 100 years of combined experience, our team of former Core and IT vendors is now working on the other side of the table – your side – offering insights and knowledge for the benefit of community financial institutions across the country. Led by industry veteran, Aaron Silva, our hard-charging team has successfully leveraged our unique expertise & data-driven approach to secure more than 105 win-win negotiations. Since 2009 we have aggregated more than \$137 million in tangible cost reduction and avoided \$46 million in costs associated with corporate events for bankers while also collaborating with vendors to modify and delete thousands of unfair, one-sided vendor contract terms.

What is the current negotiation environment for community financial institutions?

The oligopoly enjoyed by Fiserv, Fidelity (FIS), Jack Henry & Associates and the likes has gone unchecked for years putting the entire community banking industry, their collective franchises, and shareholders at great risk. At the mercy of a market dominated by Core and IT vendors, community financial institutions have often been unable to develop and deploy affordable, cutting-edge, customer-facing services. The decision on what technology to purchase next and when to get the ball rolling is a constant variable in the normal business cycle of any community banker. And while a myriad of appealing offerings exists, the current Core, IT and data processing market it is an oligopoly, leaving very few vendors to choose from, costs of services increasing exponentially, and access to innovative and competitive technologies even farther out of reach.

What services does Paladin offer?

Utilizing the most accurate and expansive national database in the market, we specialize in assisting community financial institutions through incumbent Core and IT banking contract renewals and the selection of new vendors, as well as in preparing agreements for future M&A strategies. Our Lifetime Contract Protection commitment ensures that we stand by our clients for the duration of their vendor agreement, assuring that they never overpay or are misled by future amendments.

What is the Blue Book, and how can Paladin use it to know what we should be paying?

We are the only company in the country to possess an actual "Blue Book" of market intelligence data. This means that pricing details on any service a bank might purchase from any Core or IT vendor are available for those that employ our assistance.

Our proprietary Blue Book of vendor contract, pricing, and market data was built on data unearthed during more than a year of in-depth market research and has been growing for more than a decade. The database currently includes vendor contracts from more than 1,200 institutions across the country, thousands of invoices, and a library of specific legal terms and conditions known to be acceptable to individual vendors. This gives our negotiation team the valuable intel necessary to ensure community financial institutions entering mergers or vendor negotiations are able to secure the best possible terms at the best possible price. As pioneers in the use of market intelligence and pricing data in securing more high-quality deals, our Paladin Blue Book remains the definitive source for industry analysts, researchers, and community financial institutions.

What is involved in Paladin's negotiation process?

A most critical element of our process for negotiating is the incorporation of our Paladin Playbook, a governing document that provides complete process transparency for the community financial institution involved. This document allows the institution to see what terms we are negotiating for, the expected timeline, and allows them to track outcomes in a collaborative way.

Why do bankers need Paladin? Can't they do this on their own?

Community financial institutions could certainly negotiate these deals on their own, but it would behoove them to go to the negotiation table with the advantage of real market intelligence and pricing data in hand. With these critical contracts, coming up for renewal only every 5-7 years, financial institutions simply cannot afford to risk negotiating with a metaphorical blindfold. Our focus is 100 percent on maintaining core competency, and we know how to call a vendor's bluff.

But how long does this process take?

If your institution qualifies and we are permitted to help, your team will invest a total of 3-4 hours over a 120-day period, or as long as it takes to get the job done to your satisfaction, leaving it up to us to secure a new contract or contract renewal with lower prices and better business terms. Since 2009 the average savings gained per institution has fallen between \$900,000 and \$1.2 million and there is little correlation between the amount of cost reduction and institution size. Who doesn't have time for that?

What results has Paladin seen so far?

Our team has a steadfast track record when it comes to securing negotiation successes. Since our first deals in 2009, our team has leveraged our market intelligence to help more than 105 community financial institutions reduce hard dollar Core and IT expenses between 11-43 percent per engagement, with average cost savings of \$1.26 million per deal and more than \$46 million in cost avoidance related to mergers and other routine corporate events. Our assessment, merger solution and Core and IT contract negotiation projects have been completed in as few as 84 days.

How will employing Paladin affect current vendor relationships?

Many clients wonder if reaching out for our help with tactical negotiations will negatively affect their vendor relationship or if their service levels will drop as a result of lowering costs, but each client is amazed to learn the outcome of our services is exactly the opposite. When we negotiate on a community financial institution's behalf, maintaining a positive vendor relationship is a key barometer of our mutual success. Among the many other benefits of our services, contract renewals and negotiations don't end until a win-win situation has been reached for both the institution and the Core and IT vendors. After our negotiations, the Core or IT vendor gets a happy, long-term customer paying the right price for the right services, and service levels for the bankers naturally improve as the vendors' services are now in better alignment with their current strategy. Everybody wins.