

A large, stylized number '9' in a dark green color, positioned on the left side of the slide. The background is a light green with a pattern of thin, diagonal white lines.

MARKETING TACTICS YOUR FINANCIAL INSTITUTION NEEDS TO TRY

Optimizing Your Customer Experience

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The financial industry is constantly changing. The customer perception of banking is different than it was even a few years ago, and brick-and-mortar banks and credit unions need to continue adjusting to meet the demands of a consumer base with different needs than previous generations of banked customers.

From best-in-class customer service, to brand voice and style, to community commitment, there are great ways that you can ensure your bank or credit union continues to see high customer engagement, valuable reputational upticks and ongoing retention.

It's important to future-proof your customer experience – read on to discover ways in which you can reinforce your user-friendliness, from brand to branch.



1. NIX THE COUNTER

The modern banking customer wants to engage on equal footing with his or her teller, and the traditional, unapproachable teller counter separating customer and banker is creating an unwanted barrier.

THE SOLUTION

Get rid of them! Who needs the counters when you can walk amongst your customers?

Get your tellers on the move with tablets in hand to speak with customers, who can take a comfortable seat in the branch instead of standing in an agonizing line.

Walk them through opening a checking account, applying for a loan or depositing a check in a personable, conversational setting.

WHY?

- You'll build more personable, one-to-one relationships with your customers
- You'll save a considerable amount of space in your branches
- You'll engage multi-generational customers with different levels of comfort with technology
- You'll let your customers find a comfortable spot while they wait to be assisted

FACT CHECK



MYTH

Young customers aren't coming into bank branches anymore.



REALITY

18-to-25-year-olds actually prefer banking in-branch to mobile banking

Source: Salesforce, 2016



DOING IT RIGHT

Extraco Banks in Texas opted to get rid of its stoic teller counters in favor of side-by-side customer service through pods, amping up its image as a consumer-focused bank that marries traditional and innovative. The success of its transformation spurred the creation of a bank-to-bank consulting company focused on helping other banks navigate similar changes.

extracobanks.com





2. GO RETAIL

You may consider yourself a “financial institution,” but don’t let the term “institution” fool you. Banks and credit unions are truly retail spaces. And with big-box stores and major consumer brands entering the retail-banking marketplace, getting into the retail mindset is key to improving your customer experience and keeping your branch foot traffic high.

THE SOLUTION

First thing’s first – you and your fellow staff members have to get into the retailer mindset. Emulate the brands that are doing it right – they’re all focusing on user experience.

Target customers of all ages by making your in-branch experience desirable. Install a coffee bar, offer free Wi-Fi, create meeting spaces for community groups – position yourself as a place in which people want to spend time.

WHY?

- You’ll attract customers of all ages and a captive audience ripe for upselling
- You’ll build a brand that has a great deal of positive consumer perception
- You’ll increase your word-of-mouth worthiness – happy customers are more likely to recommend you to their friends and family
- You’ll garner PR for your efforts – do something that goes above and beyond your peers’ retail branding

FACT CHECK



MYTH

My competition is fellow banks and credit unions.



REALITY

Half of all millennials are more likely to consider banking with non-financial institutions such as Google, Apple or Amazon than older generations.

Source: Makovsky, 2015





DOING IT RIGHT

Umpqua Bank in Oregon embraced the idea of considering itself a “neighborhood store,” introducing beverage bars, electronic community bulletin boards and “computer cafés” for public use. Its concepts have drawn a great deal of positive press and recognition and driven a multi-generational customer base.

umpquabank.com





3. EMBRACE DESIGN

You know the stereotype – banks need to be brick buildings with plain walls and sensible, boxy furniture. When you enter a retail space that is overtly sterile and free of personality, you're unlikely to feel welcomed and warmly embraced enough for a return visit.

THE SOLUTION

Give your branches a specific set of colors and iconography that you can push across all of your physical locations, collateral materials and web presences for a consistency in experience.

And uncomfortable, boxy furniture isn't inviting – add couches and chairs in pleasing positions that will encourage walk-ins to kick back and stay a while.

Utilize lighting with some warmth as opposed to the typical buzzing, flickering overhead lighting that reminds people of going to the doctor.

WHY?

- You'll encourage customers to stay longer, creating ample opportunity to cross-sell.
- You'll improve your word of mouth as people talk about the sleek, modern bank at which they've opened an account.
- You'll cater to the customers who are stopping in for advice on opening major accounts like mortgages and commercial loans – a comfortable, inviting environment leads to closed deals.
- You'll increase your visibility in the marketplace as an innovator and leader amongst a sea of adherence to tradition.

FACT CHECK



MYTH

My institution's brand isn't important.



REALITY

A recent case study found that increasing the number of emotionally connected customers to a brand **improved sales growth by 50%.**

Source: Harvard Business Review, 2016



DOING IT RIGHT

First Tech Federal Credit Union embraced the idea of its bank branches as lounge-style consultative zones, complete with a modern color palette and design aesthetic, comfortable seating and private member suites for one-to-one member-teller collaboration.

firsttechfed.com





4. COOPERATE

Most banks and credit unions do it, but not many talk about it. Whether it's a Habitat for Humanity project or a food drive through the local elementary school, financial institutions are cooperating on service projects and community-building efforts. The problem isn't that it's not happening – it's that the story isn't being told.

THE SOLUTION

Consumers care about what brands are doing for society. And with financial institutions among the lowest-ranking brands when it comes to consumer trust and likability, telling your bank's or credit union's volunteering stories will only help boost that negative image of "the big bad bank."

Write blog posts about your efforts, including visuals of actual bank employees rolling up their sleeves and getting involved.

And open it up for conversation on your social media platforms – engage with your community about something that's sure to elicit positive responses.

WHY?

- You'll attach a highly positive message to your bank's or credit union's name that doesn't involve product promotion.
- You'll appeal to others in your community that care about the same causes.
- You'll build relationships with fellow businesses and organizations for future collaboration.
- You'll meet Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) standards.

FACT CHECK



MYTH

Customers don't truly care about our volunteer work.



REALITY

64% of adults intentionally make purchases from socially responsible brands, and **26%** avoid making purchases from those who are not.

Source: Good.Must.Grow, 2017

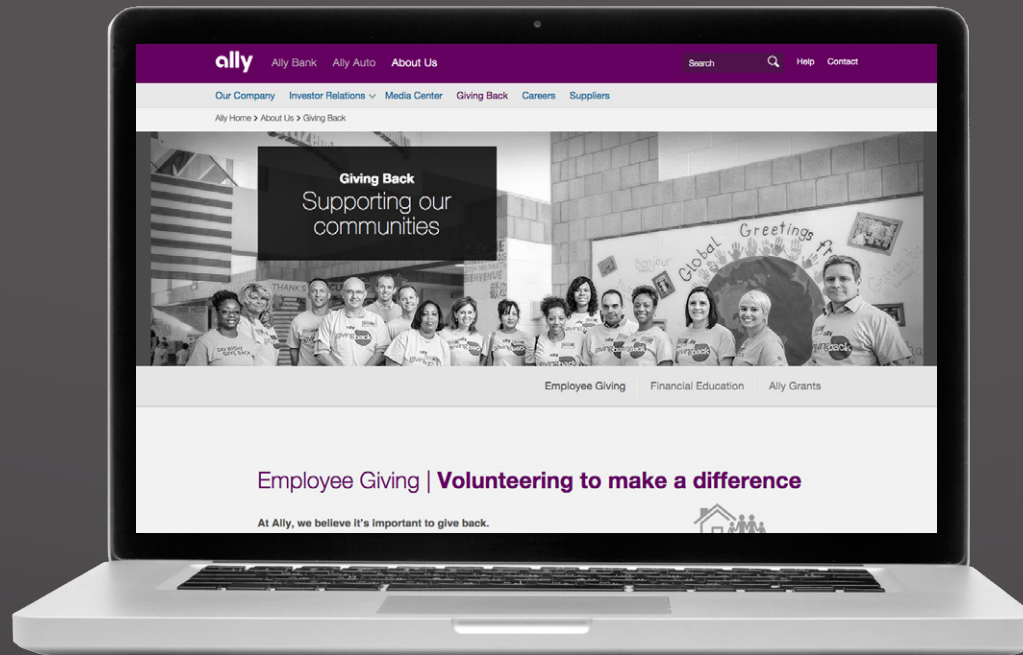




DOING IT RIGHT

Ally devotes an entire section of its website to show the many causes in which it's involved, complete with imagery and storytelling. It includes statistics about the demographics affected by the service provided, as well as opportunities for fellow community members to get involved. It even includes a takeaway one-sheet outlining the company's mission to encourage financial literacy.

ally.com





5. DON'T FEAR SOCIAL

Social media can be scary. Chances are your financial institution is probably hesitant to enter the realm of social and the potential negative commenting and disgruntled customers that may or may not come with it.

THE SOLUTION

The truth is, negative commenting about your institution is going to happen on social media whether you provide a self-hosted page on which to do it or not.

The best-case scenario is to have a bit more control over the conversation by engaging customers helpfully and positively on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Use these opportunities to spread positive brand messaging, provide tips and tools for your customers and respond swiftly to customer complaints.

WHY?

- You'll be a part of the conversation – whether positive or negative – rather than a bystander.
- You'll meet your customers where they're at, as social media is more and more commonly used for customer service.
- You'll have an inexpensive platform for promoting your services and, perhaps more importantly, your personality.

FACT CHECK



MYTH

My institution doesn't need to be on social media.



REALITY

50% of consumers cite a strong integration of social media as a deciding factor in selecting a financial institution.

Source: Capgemini & Efma, 2016



DOING IT RIGHT

FirstBank posts on its social media platforms, especially Facebook, consistently and regularly. Its page isn't inundated with hard-sell product promotions but distributed fairly evenly amongst self-marketing, financial education and community-building efforts. And virtually all customer complaints are addressed individually, politely and free of clearly canned language.

facebook.com/efirstbank





6. FIND YOUR VOICE

If you've ever assumed that consumers aren't paying very close attention to what you're saying in print and in your branches, you're sorely mistaken. In fact, consumers expect banks to provide a consistent voice and brand experience throughout the customer relationship just as much as they would a major retailer.

THE SOLUTION

Establish a set of brand and voice guidelines, and stick to them. And when it comes to in-branch experience, make sure your personality in print matches your personality in person.

Your customers are savvy enough to notice inconsistencies, so give yourself realistic standards and – the hardest part – commit to them fully.

Make sure your taglines and promotional language have meaning and interest to consumers and apply that to everything, from a basic checking brochure to your IVR greeting to your marquee.

WHY?

- You'll improve your share of wallet and customer loyalty by using a voice that's comfortably consistent but always intriguing.
- You'll eliminate disconnect between a consumer's online and in-branch experiences.
- You'll make writing materials in the future much easier – established voice standards help dictate clearly your goals and your language.

FACT CHECK



MYTH

Consumers don't care about my "**brand**" – they care about promotions, low prices and bells and whistles.



REALITY

With brand promise – a clear alignment of your mission and service goals with the actual customer experience – comes twice as much share of wallet from consumers.

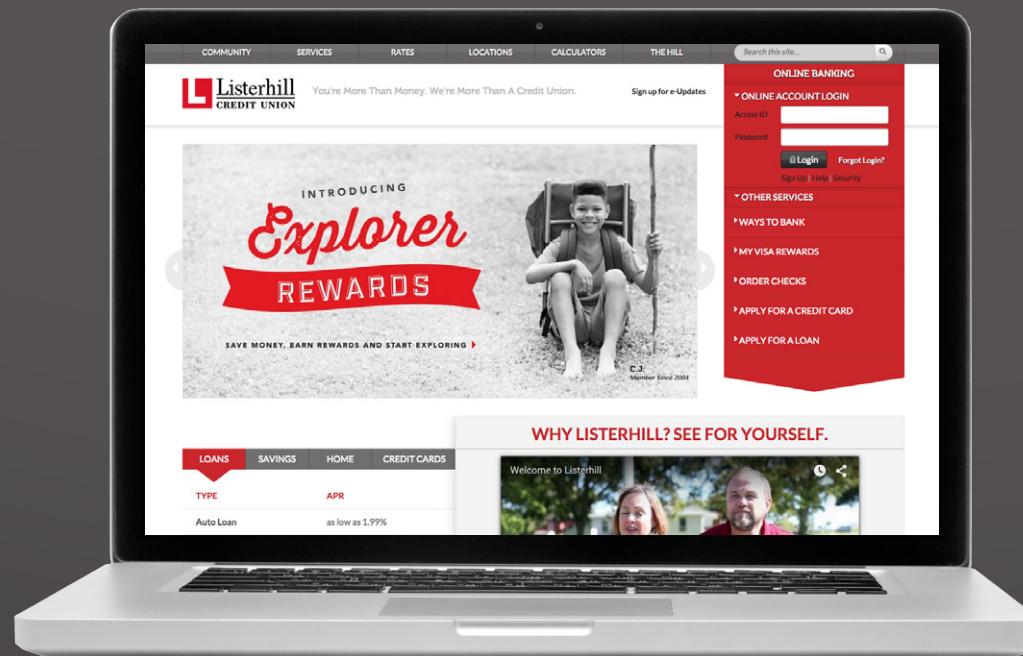
Source: Gallup, 2017



DOING IT RIGHT

Listerhill Credit Union engages in a conversational and neighborly voice that would appeal to mass demographics, and it commits to this voice throughout all of its marketing materials, from its homepage web banners to its Facebook posts to its product descriptions.

listerhill.com





7. INCENTIVIZE

Let's face it – it's tough to try and convince customers to return to your branch once they've opened their accounts, to open an email from you or to not immediately toss a mailer you sent into the trash. This is why the message you're attempting to pass along is so key.

THE SOLUTION

If your goal is to increase share of wallet by building on existing customer relationships and attracting new customers, add incentive.

If you're running a loan promotion, make sure you show your appreciation to loyal customers by adding a promotional rate or a "free gift with purchase," such as a gift card.

It's all about taking advantage of your convenience services – those that aren't big revenue-builders for your business but are merely sweetening the pot for potential customers.

The most important thing to remember is that the incentive has to be truly valuable – meaning that you should avoid flimsy giveaways with no value attached to them like branded pens, calendars and the like.

WHY?

- You'll grow share of wallet and customer loyalty by showing appreciation.
- You'll build your new customer base with attractive promotions that rival competing banks and credit unions.
- You'll make up for the cost of the incentive in increased sales and adoption.

FACT CHECK



MYTH

Banks don't need to incentivize customers to attract them.



REALITY

One-third of millennials expect to feel rewarded for their loyalty by their financial institutions.

Source: Facebook IQ, 2016



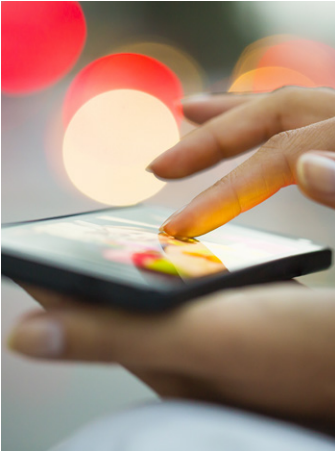


DOING IT RIGHT

Sioux Falls Federal Credit Union incentivized its members during a credit card promotion in which its cardholders were able to amass double the regular amount of rewards points – to be used toward many types of purchases, including cash back and travel – for a limited time. The incentive promotion pleased existing cardholders and attracted new members.

siouxfallsfcu.org





8. BE AVAILABLE

As consumers embrace mobile communications, face-to-face and even over-the-phone customer service is becoming decreasingly used. The ability to text or type a customer service request rather than sit on a phone line or drive to the branch is more and more desired and, ultimately, expected.

THE SOLUTION

Don't let the major retailers and tech service providers beat you to the punch. Offer your customers the opportunity to live chat with a representative directly from your website.

If you offer live chat support, or even phone line support, beyond 5 p.m., your customers will sit up and take notice of the value you add to the relationship.

And don't simply put your standardized email address on your website – include a service-level agreement that a customer will receive a response email within 24 hours.

There is a generational expectation of instant gratification when it comes to troubleshooting problems – so get as close as you feasibly can within your customer service budget.

WHY?

- You'll talk to customers in the moment, rather than hours later once frustration has built.
- You'll be very competitive – very few banks and credit unions are offering this level of on-demand service that is expected of other major companies and retailers.
- You'll improve your positive word of mouth – good customer service experiences are highly recommendable to friends and family.

FACT CHECK



MYTH

My traditional branch hours and face-to-face assistance are sufficient for meeting customer service demands.



REALITY

Quality of customer service is the No. 1 factor when interacting with a bank, and the second-most valued factor is easy-to-use online services.

Source: NGDATA, 2016

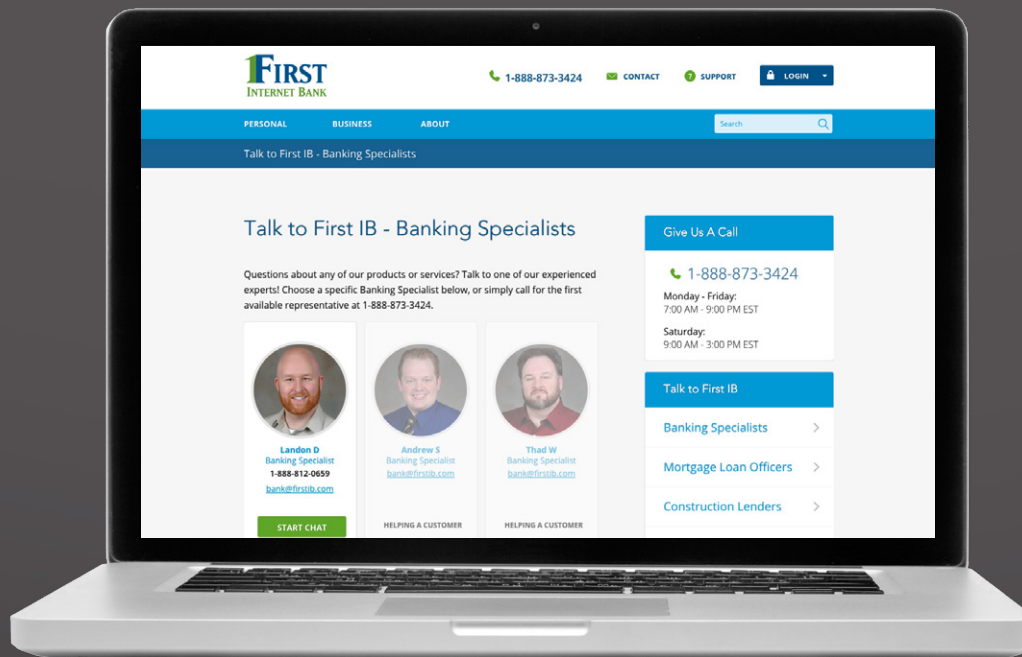




DOING IT RIGHT

First Internet Bank takes customer service to the next level. Not only are phone lines available for extended morning and evening hours, but the bank also offers live chat support. Better yet, a face is put to the chat by showing you exactly which representatives are available so you can select a banker with whom you're familiar.

firstib.com





9. CULTIVATE CONTENT

Content marketing is becoming more and more widely used in both the personal banking and commercial banking venues, especially as millennial young people start taking on the financial duties of adulthood.

THE SOLUTION

Don't be one of the last financial institutions to embrace inbound marketing efforts.

Cater to how your audience prefers to be educated on products and services. You need to become a publisher of unique content. Consider adding blogs, videos, e-books, webinars and podcasts to your web presence.

Build content around the journey your prospective customer goes through when he or she is in the market for a financial product or service: (1) Awareness, (2) Consideration and (3) Decision.

WHY?

- You'll build trust with your customer or member base.
- You'll help your site rank higher in search listings.
- You'll establish your authority around specified financial topics.
- You'll bring customers with casual interest through the buyer's journey to a purchase, whether it's an account signup or an application.

FACT CHECK



MYTH

My older customers don't care about online content as much as my younger ones do.



REALITY

Baby boomers actually consume **more online content** on a daily basis than any other generation.

Source: BuzzStream, 2016

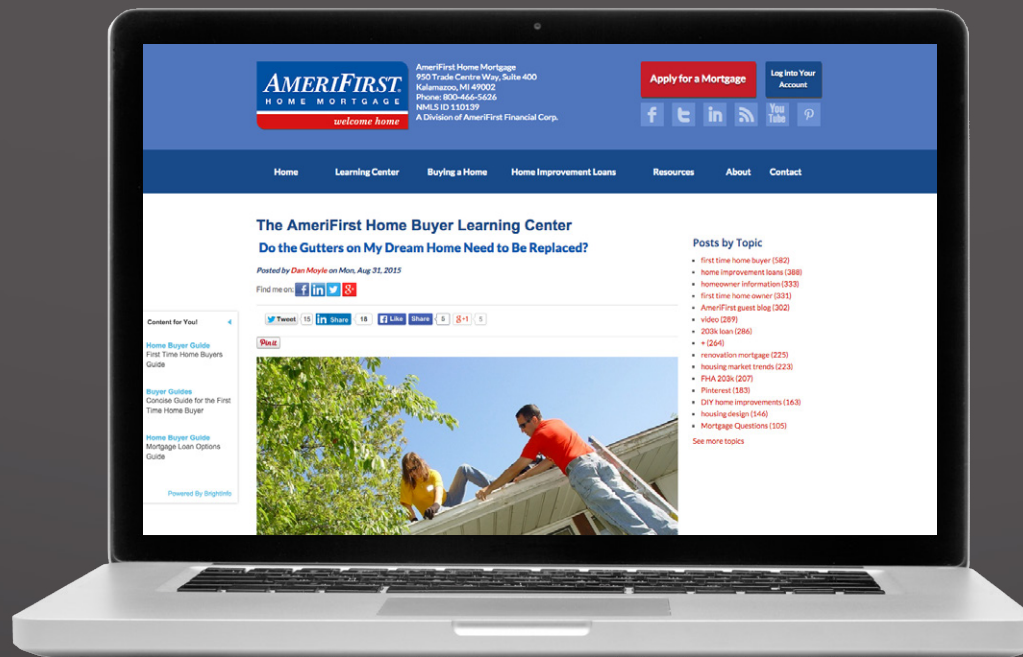




DOING IT RIGHT

AmeriFirst Home Mortgage transitioned its solely outbound marketing strategy and implemented inbound marketing through blogging, social media and content creation. It focused on the idea that a customer doesn't want to consume content about the types of mortgages AmeriFirst offers (the sales pitch), but rather content about buying and maintaining a home in a more general sense (the trusted consultant).

amerifirst.com





ABOUT EPICOSITY

Epicosity is a full-service international marketing agency for brands with purpose. Blending traditional services with a strong digital footprint, we excel at creative development, digital strategy, video production, website development, public relations and media buying and planning for financial institutions.

We're storytellers, with a digital edge.

Epicosity has a keen insight into meeting millennial demand and diversifying bank and credit union customers' product use, driving:

- Cross-sell effectiveness
- Share of wallet
- Effective regulatory navigation
- Customer loyalty building
- In-branch foot traffic

Want to learn more?

605.275.3742

info@epicosity.com



epicosity.com