



ARTICLE

COMMUNICATING COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

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Communicating commitment to community

Financial institutions are pillars of the communities they serve. Today, financial institutions serve customers near and far. Many customer journeys are entirely digital, creating an extended community.

The definition of community was changing long before 2020. COVID-19 only adds more urgency to the need for financial institutions to broaden their digital offerings to serve their evolving community. For the foreseeable future, supporting our communities means delivering essential banking services with a digital-first orientation.

Financial Wellness: The New Digital Engagement Strategy, a May 2020 report by FIS™ and Aite Group, explores the importance to financial institutions of demonstrating their commitment to the community, even as the centrality of the branch declines.



Presence in the community is vital ...

Financial institutions are necessary to the communities they belong to. That's still true even as both financial institutions and their communities grow and mature.

In Aite Group's Q1 2020 survey of 2,413 U.S. consumers reveals, giving voice to community involvement remains an important part of customer engagement:

2/3

of respondents said it was important for their primary financial institution to communicate how it helps its customers

55%

of respondents said it was important that their financial service provider supports their interests and causes by being an advocate in the community

4 in 10

respondents wanted the ability to give charitably either directly via digital banking or by supporting causes and concerns through marketplace lending

COVID-19 brings community to the forefront of every conversation. Financial institutions need to stay relevant in these community conversations – even as the centrality of the branch declines.



“Financial institutions are necessary to the communities they belong to.”

... while attachment to physical branches wanes

For many banks and credit unions, branches stand as a center of gravity within their communities. Branches have long been natural centers for engagement, visible icons of community support and primary drivers of brand identity.

Yet communities have increasingly become virtual, leaving customers less reliant on branches than ever. According to our study, 90 percent of respondents believe that having branches near them is important, yet only three in 10 respondents use a branch regularly.

COVID-19 elevates many digital services to outright necessity at a time when branch visits are impractical. Financial institutions should emphasize education, advising consumers on the vast range of services that can now be done digitally, as safely and conveniently as doing so in a branch.



“ According to our study, 90% of respondents believe that having branches near them is important.”


Social media: Engaging customers where they are

Social media is an increasingly important way for financial institutions to communicate with and support customers, members and the community.

Thirty-five percent of respondents in the FIS PACE study indicated they used social media to communicate with their primary financial service provider. Top reasons for using social media to engage their provider included:

- Finding information was easier using social media than online or mobile banking apps
- Social media was more efficient to get questions answered and problems solved
- Social media was a good way to get their primary service provider's attention

Engaging financial institution customers on social media is a foundational skill in today's digital-first world. Doing so effectively and with an eye to the best possible customer experience is critical to community engagement in an age when community exists far beyond the branch.



“ 35% of respondents in the FIS PACE study indicated they used social media to communicate with their primary financial service provider.”

The future of community engagement

As consumers expand their definition of community, financial institutions will want to build and reinforce their brand digitally. As the role of the branch changes, engaging with the community will need to look different, as will communication about those good works.

Financial institutions will need to reevaluate what a branch means to their community and how to best support evolving consumer needs. That means financial institutions should look to improve core digital services, including digital branding efforts and community engagement via social media.




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