

Digital Banking Through a Pandemic

The novel coronavirus has made a sudden and immediate impact on branch banking throughout the country, shining a spotlight on the digital banking options presented by financial institutions. While a trend towards an expanded digital offering that can serve consumers and their banking needs is not necessarily new, it has never been more integral to the business models of financial institutions that have depended on their branch network.

Well before we had even heard of COVID-19, digital banking had solidified itself as a prime channel for consumer. In 2019, 73% of consumer banking interactions occurred through the digital channels. Specifically, mobile has taken top billing with 42% of those interactions in 2019, up from 22% in 2015. This rise of the mobile app marks a key part of the customer experience. With online banking accounting for 21% of transactions, ATMs, telephone banking and branches split what's left of the pie, roughly 27%.



While digital was already taking a large portion of transactions and interactions, the COVID-19 pandemic has limited access to branches, both for customers and employees of financial institutions. In this environment, now is the time to focus your efforts and attention on your digital banking.

If you haven't already, you can start by building your marketing efforts around your digital offering. Through any means available, be it social media, e-mail, your public site or any other outlet, inform your customers of their digital banking capabilities. If you have a special feature through your app or online banking, such as credit monitoring, personal financial management or card controls, make people aware of these tools and how they can be useful in navigating through the pandemic.

Once they reach your digital channels, you can use the real estate available to share updates on branch accessibility, special banking features, financial advice and relief updates. Putting your data to use, you can use your online banking site and app to make suggestions on how your customers can make the best use of the channel. You can direct them to mobile deposit and person-to-person transfers, giving them the tools and the instruction to allow them to manage their funds with ease. In the absence of a fully functioning branch network, your digital channels can become your first line of customer service, guiding your customers to fulfill their banking needs.

While digital can take the bulk of transactions, you will still have customers who have questions and will need to speak with a person. While chat features and social media can provide a means of communication and possibly support, some customers will still prefer to speak with someone over the phone. These customers are not only searching for help with transactions, but also for technical support in using the digital channel. For this reason, ensuring your phone number is easily accessible through your digital channel is key. So too is having a call center to support an influx in calls. If your branch personnel has been moved to remote work, these employees can supplement your call support efforts, helping to ease the transition to digital use.

For all of the reasons that digital banking is appealing to financial institutions, speed, convenience, access, reduced transaction costs, investing in the channel has made sense for years. Now that we are in a situation in which digital banking needs to be a complete banking solution, another reason has jumped ahead of all others: the health and well-being of your customers, your employees and your community. The investments financial institutions have made and will make to provide an immersive digital experience can give your customers confidence in your institution and peace of mind that their money is accessible and safe, leaving a lasting impact that will stretch beyond COVID-19.