



Rural Customers Need Mobile Services

📱 mobile banking business customers

Summary: Even as branches are closing in rural areas, there are ways to support these customers and increase business.

Scientists have developed a structure that operates similar to an octopus. It senses, computes and responds without direct instruction from a central processor. This stretchable material senses touch and strain and could be used for things like soft robotics to prosthetic devices.

As with octopus tentacles, customers in rural areas all around the US are already familiar with the reach of mobile services, and nearly 90% own smartphones. But, how do urban and suburban customers interact with remote services? Community bankers constantly monitor these things, as they formulate the mobile portions of their businesses.

Banking deserts have spread throughout rural America. In 2018, around [82% of Americans lived in urban areas](#), according to the Center for Sustainable Systems at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. By 2050, the figure will be 90%.

Under pressure to trim branches given changes in customer habits, banks logically keep branches where more of their customers reside. That leaves rural areas in the lurch potentially, given declining populations.

That being said, banks can increase the amount of business they do in rural areas. This is possible even as physical branches are closed--if they shift interactions to digital channels and automate where possible. It can even be a cost-effective change, but to do it well, bankers need to understand how rural banking customers use rural technologies.

Rural customers are already active in the digital economy. As mentioned, almost 90% are smartphone owners, and they use mobile banking more often than urban Americans, according to a survey done by the New York digital marketing company Fluent.

However, while rural customers are fluent in online economics, there are some differences in how they use the virtual world. Rural residents are more dependent on their phones than urban customers, because they are less likely to own a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer.

If you're looking to increase your share of rural customers, you'll need a mobile-first strategy. Use mobile apps to digitize and automate transactions and interactions with mobile account openings, chatbots, and seamless audio and video connections to your staff.

Alerts, spending analysis, notifications, and other virtually delivered advice can also build the bond between customer and bank. That, combined with inviting customers to schedule remote or in-branch meetings through a mobile app can all boost customer engagement opportunities.

To gain customers, consider marketing mobile services by emphasizing the benefits rural customers can gain from banking in a mobile-centric way. Cross-channel information delivery that uses both digital content and staff can help customers learn to use mobile features. Every customer interaction should include a mention of

how customers can bank remotely too in order to keep building your base of new customers while retaining existing ones, no matter how they bank.

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