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Driving Customer Growth in 2023

A BAI SPECIAL REPORT PRESENTED BY SALESFORCE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY KIM COLLINS

Refining the digital experience to drive growth in 2023

Digital banking continues its forward march in both volume and sophistication. By skillfully leveraging technology and data, bankers are creating digital experiences that attract, engage and retain customers.

But digital for digital's sake is a non-starter. To build a truly omnichannel experience that powers acquisition and retention, bankers are designing smart, strategic digital channels that complement their well-established human channels.

In this special report, BAI conducts a series of question-and-answer sessions with four leaders in the banking and technology sectors. We're certain you'll find their responses illuminating and actionable.

In the first Q&A, Abbas Merchant, executive vice president and chief marketing officer of Regions Bank, notes the customer experience, of course, begins with onboarding where first impressions are everything.

During the first 90 days, Region's new onboarding program features 25 well-curated, highly personalized communications through multiple channels. The program helps customers maximize value from their relationship with the bank.

In the very first email, Regions embeds a personalized dynamic video that refers to the customer by their first name and summarizes key services specifically useful to them. The program's payoff has been impressive: 50% higher balances, greater engagement and better retention.

Greg Blausey, Salesforce's senior director, banking industry solutions and strategy, speaks to the power of consistency in every phase of the customer acquisition journey.

Blausey, a former banking executive, says creating consistent experiences for customers and constantly delighting them can be complicated. But smart data analysis that points to a customer's needs and preferences produces consistency across human and digital channels that translates to a financial services organization's success.

Zach Hamilton, chief digital officer of Synovus Bank, believes it's critical to continually enhance the digital customer experience to promote growth. Over the last four years, Synovus has touched or replaced nearly every digital solution available to customers. Especially critical, he says, is giving customers the option to engage in your bank's digital platforms the way they want to.

But don't complicate things, he advises. Focus on the things that matter: convenience, ease of use, personalization, advice and security.

Using the right products and the right technology at the right time has been the driving force of Commerce Bank's customer growth strategy, says Susan Bergen, executive vice president of corporate marketing.

For example, the bank's mobile app delivers a high-touch customer experience from their smartphone. The mobile app offers customers "a banker in their pocket." It's not an automated bot, but a real, live person who provides personalized advice.

Financial services organizations are driving growth in 2023 with a smart selection of channels and approachable technology to meet customers' growing appetite for digital banking. But more than that, banks and credit unions that leverage data to personalize customer relationships will carry the day in this new age of banking.

Kim Collins, is the director of digital content at BAI.

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Driving growth through digital

Q&A WITH **ABBAS MERCHANT, REGIONS BANK**

WHEN IT COMES to data and analytics, banks need to be digital-first to meet customers where they are. The experience Abbas Merchant, Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer of Regions Bank has in developing data driven marketing organizations at both Regions and M&T Bank makes him uniquely qualified to discuss this topic.

Merchant joined Regions in 2021 with a mandate of providing strategic direction across all aspects of marketing, including strategy and insights, brand and communications, media and performance marketing and experiential marketing. That's a big job, but Abbas is ready. Prior to Regions, he served in leadership roles in marketing at M&T Bank, U.S. Bank and Scotts Miracle-Gro. He holds an MBA from Drexel University and a BBA from Temple University.

Merchant talked with BAI about how his team focuses on the customer experience for Regions, a regional bank operating throughout the South, the Midwest and Texas.

What role do data and analytics play in customer making business decisions?

Data and analytics play a critical role in all marketing decisions, and especially the most important decisions. That said, the data are merely a starting point. What I mean is that while data is a critical ingredient, it requires a disciplined approach to harness its power.

First, like any valuable asset, we must inventory, secure and organize the data and make it accessible to the analysts and decision makers. Then, we simply answer three questions: what, so what and, most importantly, now what?

> "We may have discovered the wisdom of the world, but if we don't act on it, it merely serves an academic purpose. So, translating the insights into action is the most important, yet often the most ignored aspect."

"What" involves identifying the key questions we are attempting to answer and hypotheses we might have regarding the issue at hand. "So what" involves data analyses, gleaning insights and synthesizing recommendations. The third question is the most important. This goes well beyond the recommendations to figuring out what needs to happen to act on them. We may have discovered the wisdom of the world, but if we don't act on it, it merely serves an academic purpose. So, translating the insights into action is the most important, yet often the most ignored aspect.

Has this role changed in the last five years?

Yes and no. Yes, because we now have access to vast types and amounts of data, computing capabilities and sophisticated techniques such as AI and machine learning, etc., and the channel mix has also changed in favor of targeted digital and omnichannel marketing. But what has remained the same is the focus on translating the insights into action or the three questions I mentioned earlier—what, so what, and now what?

How do you go about establishing metrics to measure the efficacy of marketing efforts for acquisition and retention?

Understandably, acquisition versus retention (or loyalty) requires a separate set of metrics because they refer to distinct audiences—acquisition focuses on prospects or non-customers, whereas loyalty focuses on existing customers. That said, broadly speaking we use three types of metrics: delivery, engagement and outcome.

Delivery metrics such as direct marketing (e.g., emails delivered) and targeted digital media impressions tell us whom we reached with our marketing tactics. Engagement metrics, such as clicks, visits, and applications started, tell us how the targeted audiences

ABBAS MERCHANT
REGIONS BANK

reacted to our communications. We also use market research to understand how our marketing communications are influencing consumer perceptions of Regions. Outcome metrics such as conversion rate, cost per acquisition, return on marketing investment and months to payback tend to be the common ways we measure the impact of the marketing tactics.

Then, we make sure that we have outlined the success metrics and test and learn criteria ahead of time so that we can determine the performance of the marketing efforts or glean learnings for ongoing optimization of marketing tactics.

We deliberately allocate marketing dollars to ensure that we are dedicating significant spend to test and learn. For example, we allocate about 50% to 75% of the marketing spend to test and learn, which focuses on optimization. These tests leverage past learnings and hypotheses and tend to have a high success rate. But they lead to a 15%-to-20% improvement in results. We refer to these as ongoing optimizations.

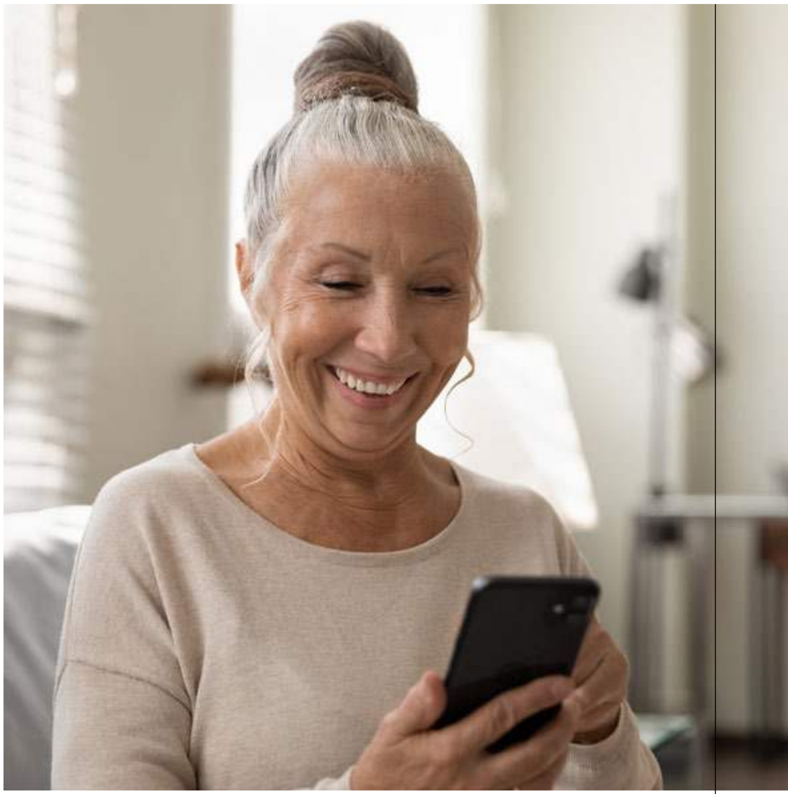
We allocate about 15% to 25% on efforts that test the frontiers of our knowledge. These generally have a lower likelihood of success, but higher returns if successful. Please note that these returns are not just financial but could be in terms of deeper insights that can help us craft new tests that may have a higher likelihood of success. And finally, we spend about 5% to 15% of the investment on tests that could be exploring new frontiers. You could think of these purely as R&D.

What departments need to be involved and how do you best work with them?

This is a very critical issue. Involving the key stakeholders and collaborating with them along the journey—not just at the point of decision—is very important. Collaboration does not happen by itself, it must be orchestrated deliberately by bringing along the right stakeholders and seeking their feedback during the process. In my experience, there are three necessary elements to make this possible.

First, a culture of collaboration is necessary. Over the years, I have been fortunate to serve in many great organizations and all of them would claim that collaboration is core to their culture, which is true but there is more to it. I have learned that we all succumb to the superhero syndrome, where one group or department receives or claims the recognition (or as it was saving the day). And in many cases, there are transformation initiatives, typically facilitated by external consultants, that start with team building and collaboration exercises with "new-ways-of-working" being a common mantra. But the success of these initiatives is often short-lived. That's why it is very difficult to make this collaboration sustainable.

At Regions, I find that collaboration is indeed core to our culture. I don't see the superhero syndrome. Instead, we believe in the



"league of superheroes," where the superpower of each individual or group complements the others and synergies are created whereby the total is greater than the sum of its parts. And this is consistently reinforced by the leaders at the highest level of the organization. Even with this as the core tenet, we must be deliberate in ensuring that we focus on it.

With the importance of the nature and type of collaboration established, from a marketing perspective, the right stakeholders need to be involved, which includes the following: business lines and product teams; channels such as frontline bankers, contact centers, digital, etc.; finance; customer insights and, finally, the marketing strategists.

We are also intentional about ensuring that we are consistently seeking input and addressing any objections and aligning on the progress. This requires the hard work of influencing each other and working towards a common goal, and doing it with a sense of urgency so that we don't bog down the process with bureaucracy. When we are at our best, this approach works smoothly, otherwise we de-brief, learn and improve.

Tell me about the customer experience you provide.

Many times, customers may select a credit card or a bank because they have a need and, perhaps, they see a special promotion or it may also be based on convenience. At the end of the day, banking is a relationship business.

Therefore, to acquire new customers, we must first have a competitive value proposition: products, solutions and offers. But by acquiring a new customer, we are merely getting the opportunity to build that relationship with the customer and eventually benefit by meeting more of the customers' financial needs and gaining a greater share of the customer wallet. This is where customer experience becomes critical. While an attractive value proposition may entice the customer to test us, it is the experience we deliver that turns new customers into loyal customers.

When it comes to engaging and connecting with customers, the most important element is empathy, which really means that we must understand what is most important to the customers in the moment. With that in mind, there are three things that are most important to engaging with customers and delivering a good customer experience.

First is their intent—what are they trying to accomplish now? Second is determining where they are in their journey—where are they in the process of getting the task done? And finally, how can we reduce the burden on the customers—making it simple, easy, and quick to accomplish the task at hand?

To that end, when we interact with customers online, we try to understand what their intent is—what specifically are they trying to accomplish now—in this session. Then, and only then, we can figure out how we can help them. We call these "moments of truth"—Moments that matter to customers and how we show up in these moments are what delivering a good experience is all about, and while doing that, we might earn their trust. So, organizations must first and foremost really focus on understanding what is important in the moment to the customers.

For example: If a customer is looking to do a wire transfer and comes to our website looking for the routing number, let's not disrupt their flow by trying to sell them a checking account. Instead, we want to get them the info they are looking for quickly, easily, and simply.

On the other hand, if the consumer is shopping for a mortgage, it would be good to know whether he or she is a first-time home buyer or a trade-up home buyer and whether the consumer is in research mode or ready to decide. Having access to this type of data or insight is critical for delivering a relevant experience.

Here are a couple of examples of how we are personalizing experiences today. The first example is our new customer onboarding program. We all know that first impressions are very important. During the first 90 days, our new onboarding program includes 25 well-curated and highly personalized communications through multiple channels that help the customer get the most value from their relationship with the bank. We tailor the message to each customer based on what products and services they have, where they opened the account and their level of engagement, behavior, etc.

In fact, in the first email, we embed a personalized dynamic video that actually refers to customers by their first name and summarizes the key services - most of them are free of charge - that would be specifically useful to them, focusing on how they can avoid surprises, easily manage their cash flow, etc. So, it is pretty cool. But it is more than just cool. We have seen 50% higher balances, greater engagement, and better retention. Furthermore, we also see much higher email open rates and higher click-through rates. Our goal was to deliver the same great experience they would receive in the branch in the comfort of their homes.

Another example is that of our decisioning platform, we affectionately call it ROSIE, which stands for REGIONS OPTIMAL SOLUTIONS INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM. We feed a wide range of data into ROSIE including customer history, behavior, and interaction (real-time and delayed data), which are all used in AI/ML models combined with business rules to predict customer intent and journey ,which allows us to personalize experiences and messaging to people that interact through any channel. We present more than 2 billion messages across all channels which roughly translates into one message/customer/day.

Today ROSIE does a good job of delivering relevant Next Best Actions (NBA) or personalized messages or offers, but our vision for ROSIE is to migrate from NBAs to Next Best Experiences (NBX). This really means delivering a sequence of relevant communications to the customers, not only when they interact with us, but also proactively reaching out to them across the different channels. Similarly, we see strong engagement with this type of orchestrated and personalized communication.

The value of consistency in every phase of the customer acquisition journey

Q&A WITH **GREG BLAUSEY, SALESFORCE**

GREG BLAUSEY, SALESFORCE'S senior director, banking industry solutions and strategy, spent 20 years as a banker building trust and developing lasting relationships with customers. He came to learn the power of a single customer relationship management (CRM) platform that provides a 360-degree view of a customer. The platform deftly leverages data to create more personalized, memorable customer experiences. In this Q&A, Blausey addresses several issues that are critical to a financial services organization's success—from the power of automation to the importance of consistency in every phase of the customer acquisition journey. Amid the current turmoil in the banking industry, Blausey says bankers in 2023 should never lose sight of the value of building loyalty, which begins with a customer-centric strategy.

What are the five key phases in the customer acquisition journey?

It starts with **acquisition**, which could be via a digital channel, a landing page or an interactive tool. It could also be through a human channel with a relationship manager, someone in the branch or even over the phone. Next is **discovery**, which allows the bank to learn as much as possible about the customer—learning what makes them tick, listening to their challenges and formally documenting them. The **verification** phase is a critical step for banks to fulfill their regulatory obligations or compliance requirements, assuring they are doing business with the right customers. In the **evaluation** phase, banks apply what they've learned up to that point to determine which offerings are the best fit for their customer. Lastly, **origination** is the opportunity to put the right combination of products and services in place for the customer to drive tool adoption and use data to track all of this effort to revenue.

GREG BLAUSEY
SALESFORCE

Is there one phase that is particularly important?

That often depends on a banker's perspective. A compliance officer would likely consider the verification phase, in which all the know-your-customer boxes are checked off, to be most important. On the other hand, a marketer who's focused on driving new business and developing customer personas and the associated journeys might say that the acquisition phase is paramount. Sales leaders would say it's the discovery phase, as we're probing and learning as much as we can to optimize the product set or solution to put in place. It's all a matter of perspective. But what's really important is the customer and that there is consistency from one phase to the next. Creating consistent customer experiences and constantly delighting them can be very complicated if we let it. But smart data analysis that points to a customer's needs and preferences will ensure a consistent experience across human and digital channels that delights and retains a customer. That's what's most important.

> "Creating consistent customer experiences and constantly delighting them can be very complicated if we let it. But smart data analysis that points to a customer's needs and preferences will ensure a consistent experience across human and digital channels that delights and retains a customer."

Why is data so key to optimizing the customer journey?

When I was a young banker, my manager gave me a valuable piece of advice: make the most of a customer's first 90 days with the bank. This time is their honeymoon period—it's when they most trust you and are most willing to share information. It was great advice, but thanks to connected CRM, banks can better glean valuable customer insight beyond that first 90 days and leverage it to nurture the relationship. The steady stream of data over the course of the relationship provides data points that can be turned into an experience or a proactive service recommendation. Data is certainly plentiful and is becoming easier to capture or acquire, but it is the unification, harmonization and evolution of this data where the magic really happens. A customer who joined at age 21 is much different at age 50 and yet is still the same person. A bank must keep up with the changes in a customer's life to ensure their products and services are relevant. Customers will stay engaged if there's something in it for them.

What are the advantages of a digital platform that integrates a bank's existing data with machine learning and AI?

Machine learning and AI are important because they help ensure the timeliness of the data, which has a shelf life. That life could be a week, a month or a year. Machine learning and AI allow a bank to quickly incorporate real-time data. Most banks have so much data that they don't know what to do with it or where to begin stitching it together. A machine learning platform works behind the scenes, rapidly surfacing customer insights and intelligence. AI built into the platform enables it to digest massive amounts of data in real time, sort it in the context of the customer's needs and then leverage that intelligence to present a relevant, real-time offer.

How can banks deliver customer experiences across digital touchpoints and human interactions to foster trust?

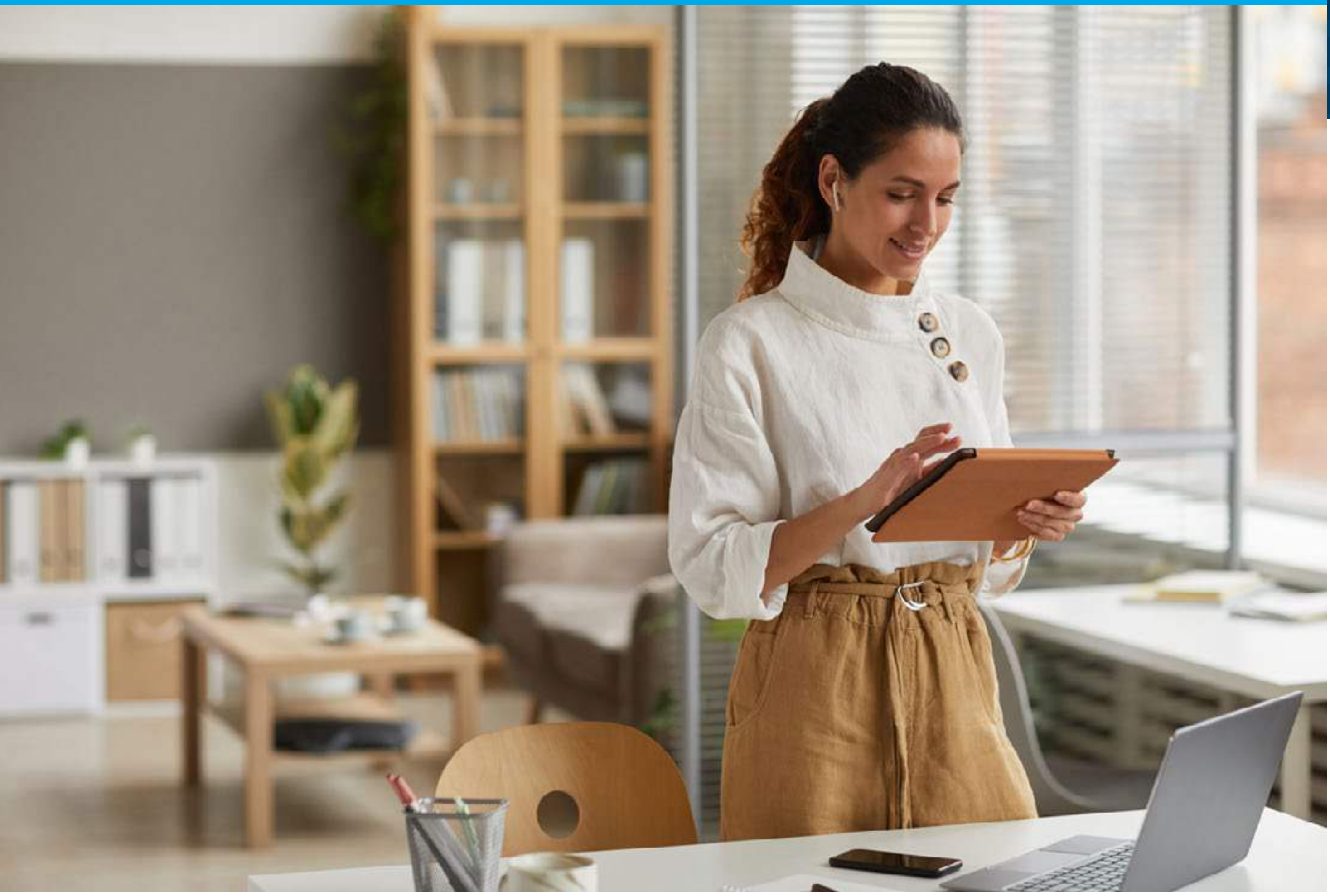
It starts by focusing on the customers and understanding what will delight them. One way to do that is to flip the customer experience and try to see it only from their perspective, thinking about what it feels like for them. Some banks do this very well. But it takes more than empathy to build trust. Transparency is just as important. Transparency is sometimes as simple as letting customers know exactly where things stand in their mortgage application process, for example. Banks should borrow a page from Domino's and its infamous pizza tracker that lets hungry customers know exactly where their pizza is and when it will be delivered. For many mortgage applicants, it's the first time in their lives they've done something like apply for a mortgage. But too many of them are unsure about where things stand, which is unsettling and diminishes trust. Help them understand where they are and assure them the process is moving forward. Finally, a good way to build trust is showing appreciation. All you have to do is say thank you in an authentic way.

How should banks be prioritizing their customer growth strategies in 2023?

I was just at a banking industry conference in Las Vegas where there was much talk about the race for deposits in the wake of the Silicon Valley Bank failure. I get that. Bankers have balance sheets to manage and liquidity to care about at the moment. But what they also must focus on this year is building loyalty, which begins by putting the customer at the center of everything they do. Loyal, long-term, happy customers drive profitability. Thinking holistically about customers slows attrition and grows the customer base. It comes down to the discovery phase we talked about earlier, in which you've learned what makes a customer tick. Marry that with the data, continually evolve with the customer's story and grow that relationship.

Superior digital experiences are key to customer growth

Q&A WITH **ZACH HAMILTON, SYNOVUS BANK**



FOR SYNOVUS BANK, providing the utmost digital customer experience is one of the key factors in driving customer growth in 2023. Afterall, if a bank can't deliver the type of intuitive, frictionless experience with the latest features and functionalities on both its online banking site and mobile app, customers will very likely go elsewhere. Especially the younger set.

Zach Hamilton, Chief Digital Officer of the $59.6 billion-asset bank based in Columbus, Georgia, shares why it's critical to continually enhance the digital experience for customers, how Synovus is going about doing that and how it impacts the bank's customer acquisition and retention goals.

Why is a strong digital experience key to acquiring new customers?

Customers today expect a seamless digital experience when interacting with their banks. They want to access their accounts, check their balances, transfer funds and perform other banking transactions quickly and easily. If a bank cannot offer a user-friendly digital experience, potential—and existing—customers are likely to choose a competitor that can.

A strong digital experience can also help build trust. By providing secure and reliable digital banking services, banks can demonstrate that they take their customers' financial security seriously. This can help reassure customers that their money is safe and that they can trust the bank to handle their financial transactions.

ZACH HAMILTON
SYNOVUS BANK

How have you improved the digital customer experience at Synovus?

Over the last four years, we have touched or replaced nearly every major digital solution we have available to our customers. Back in 2019 we replaced our consumer online and mobile application and we have continued to innovate and enhance that platform. During Covid, we substantially increased our focus and investment with digital account opening and onboarding solutions. And last year we completed the final wave of a migration to a next generation commercial and treasury digital platform that has been a huge enabler to our commercial lines of business.

Which features and functionalities of a mobile banking app are now table stakes, and which new ones are desirable to have, to better attract and retain customers?

If I think about the industry at large, I think the table stakes haven't changed much over the past few years: account balance, transaction history, transfers, mobile check deposit, ATM/branch locator, biometric login, alerts, card management and support (chat, secure message, click to call, etc.) to name a few.

In the coming years, I see this list increasing dramatically. Personalized financial advice and low-friction budgeting and spend tracking tools are two that I am having a lot of conversations around. Mobile payments will continue to be an interesting area to pay attention to, as well as conversational AI capabilities, digital identity verification and perhaps even augmented reality experiences.

How are you accommodating the preferences of all generations within your digital platforms?

Younger generations in particular have grown up in a digital world, and they prefer self-service—they want to figure things out themselves. For Gen Xers and baby boomers, it's often more about just needing something simple and basic: "I have a way of doing things. I'm willing to adopt digital, but don't inundate me with a bunch of stuff. I just want to get in, do my transactions and get out."

But you need to give every customer the option to engage in your digital platforms the way they want to. So how do we become relevant for all those different needs? For people to come in and do everything themselves or have the ability to have a conversation with a human if they need to? It's a balancing act—it's very important not to disenfranchise any demographic.

We're not there yet. We are exploring segmentation opportunities within our digital platforms and how that would feel to different demographics, depending on their goals. We're aiming to have one common mobile app and not three or four in the app store—one app that can be segmented to give people the customer experience that they prefer.

Users will be able to download the app and choose which experience they like—one that is more fully engaging with a few more bells and whistles or one that is streamlined and drastically simplified. Such an app can also have other types of segmentation, like for the mass affluent and other customer segments who may have different needs.

"Most banks offer multiple channels for accessing accounts, such as mobile apps, online banking platforms and ATMs. However, the customer experience across these channels is not always consistent, and there may be gaps in functionality or service between channels."

How do you feel the industry is doing overall regarding delivering a true, seamless omnichannel experience across digital and physical channels?

While progress has been made in recent years, I believe that the banking industry still has work to do when it comes to providing a true, seamless omnichannel experience for customers. Most banks offer multiple channels for accessing accounts, such as mobile apps, online banking platforms and ATMs. However, the customer experience across these channels is not always consistent, and there may be gaps in functionality or service between channels.

For example, a customer may be able to perform a certain transaction on the mobile app, but not through online banking, or vice versa. This can create frustration and confusion for customers who expect a consistent experience across all channels. Despite these challenges, I believe that the industry is moving in the right direction when it comes to omnichannel banking. Many banks are investing in technology and infrastructure to better integrate channels and improve the customer experience.

What are the IT challenges to providing a true omnichannel experience?

Banks must integrate data from various sources, such as mobile apps, online banking platforms and ATMs, to provide a seamless customer experience. This can be challenging, as different channels may use different data formats and may not communicate with each other in real-time.

Many banks still use legacy systems that were not designed to support an omnichannel experience. These systems may be outdated and difficult to integrate with newer technologies, making it challenging to provide a seamless experience across channels.

Providing a seamless omnichannel experience requires secure data sharing across channels. Banks must ensure that customer data is protected at all times and that third-party providers are meeting security standards.

Additionally, banks must ensure that their systems can handle the increased volume of transactions and data sharing that comes

with providing an omnichannel experience. This requires scalable infrastructure and robust testing to ensure that systems are performing optimally.

What's on the horizon for future digital banking improvements?

The future of digital banking is exciting, and there are several trends and advancements on the horizon that will improve the digital banking experience for customers. Here are a few that are top of mind for me.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) technologies are increasingly being used in banking to improve the customer experience. For example, AI-powered chatbots can help customers with simple queries and requests 24/7, and ML algorithms can provide personalized financial advice and recommendations that dynamically adjust based on customer patterns and behaviors.

Blockchain technology certainly has the potential to dramatically transform the banking industry. You already see many of the larger financial institutions investing heavily in this space.

Open banking is a concept where banks allow third-party developers to access customer data and develop new financial services and products. This can lead to more innovation in banking and give customers more options for managing their finances.

Seamless omnichannel experience: customers are increasingly using multiple devices and channels to access their bank accounts, and they expect a seamless experience across all of them. Banks are investing in technology that allows customers to start a transaction on one device or channel and continue it on another without interruption.

As cyber threats continue to evolve, banks have been investing for some time in security features such as biometric authentication, facial recognition, and two-factor authentication to protect customer data and prevent fraud. Various applications of AI and ML technologies are finding their way into this space.

Advancements in quantum computing also have the potential to significantly enhance encryption and decryption methods, making it more difficult for cyber criminals to steal sensitive data. There are also some interesting advancements in behavioral analytics and intelligence that allow for the identification of bad actors in real-time, which will bring some exciting opportunities to banks to better protect their customers.

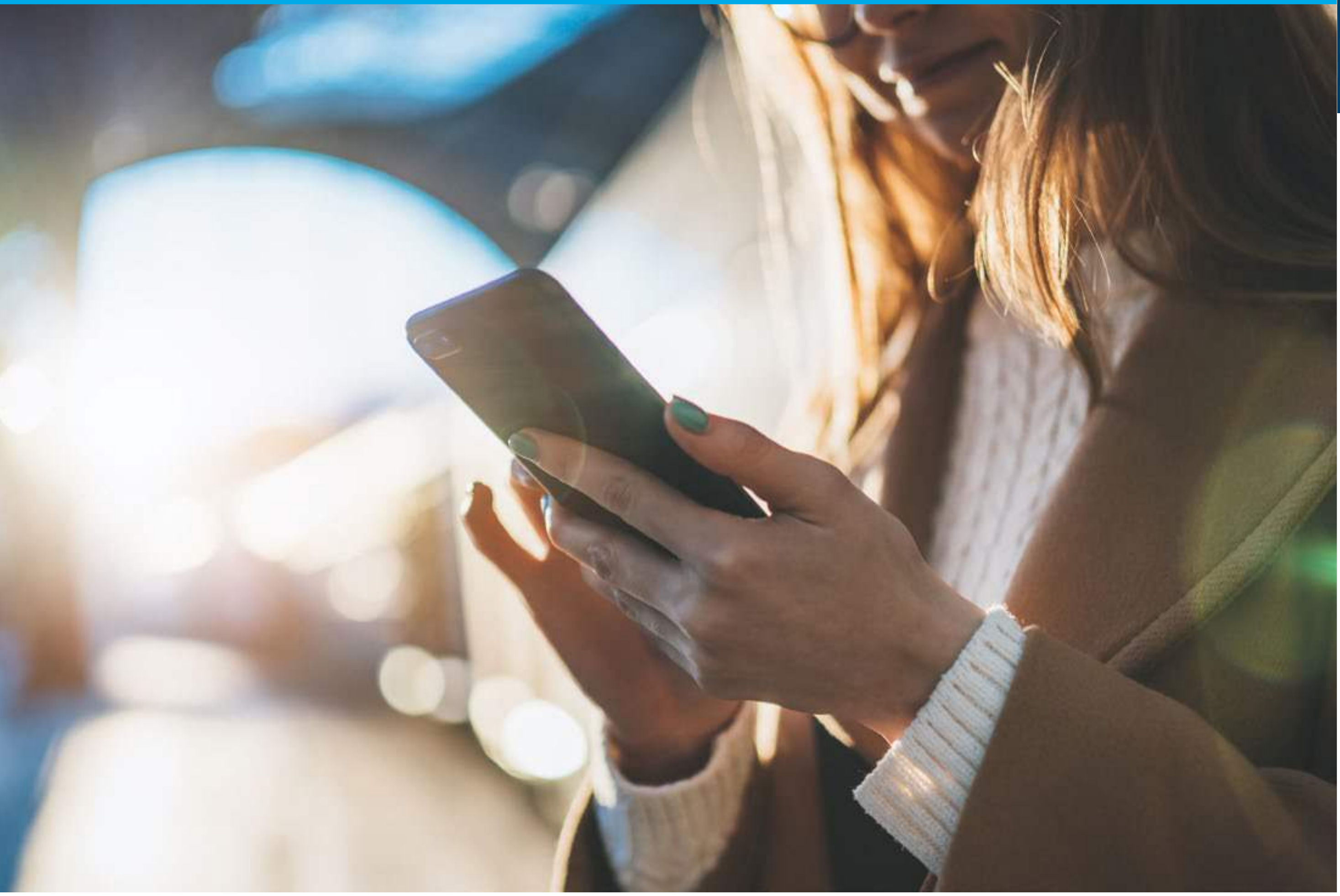
How are you using Synovus' digital banking experience as a differentiator to retain customers, as well as acquire new customers?

We put the customer at the center of every decision. And in many cases, to put the customer at the center, you must also consider the banker, advisor or customer care representative that has the personal connection with the customer. We don't view differentiation or innovation as solely a digital thing. Our approach is combining the best of both worlds and deploying solutions and capabilities in a fashion that is complementary to our digital and physical channels.

But to answer your question, specifically, with everything we build digitally we don't overcomplicate it and focus on the things that matter to our customers: convenience, ease of use, personalization, advice and security. We feel if you do these things well, you will stand above the competition.

Using the right products, the right technology at the right time to promote customer growth

Q&A WITH **SUSAN BERGEN, COMMERCE BANK**



COMMERCE BANK IS driving growth in 2023 by doing what it's always done: helping customers navigate their complex financial challenges so they can enjoy life's best moments, says Susan Bergen, executive vice president of corporate marketing. Bergen believes the nearly 160-year-old, $32-billion-asset regional bank headquartered in Kansas City and St. Louis has the products and technology to help its retail and business customers get through their toughest financial challenges. Products driving Commerce's customer acquisition and retention strategies this year include a new mobile app that allows customers to choose a banker and cash-flow management solutions to help them save time and money. The bank, she says, has invested in marketing systems that generate data insights. These insights help the bank better understand customers and ensure the right messages about relevant products and services are reaching them at the right time in the right channel. By collaborating with IT and data leaders, the bank can better anticipate what customers want in the years ahead.

SUSAN BERGEN
COMMERCE BANK

Where does customer acquisition fall in your 2023 priorities?

Growing our customer base is key to our future, so it is a high priority. We use customer acquisition strategies to create continuous opportunities to reinforce that Commerce Bank is here to take care of our customers and help them focus on what matters most—in both challenging and prosperous times.

What are some of the key messages you've been focused on in your acquisition marketing efforts?

Our acquisition marketing messages start with the customer's financial needs. Those range from cash-flow management solutions that help them save money, save time and utilize their money conveniently and safely, to investment strategies that help preserve or grow their assets. They also include financial education and planning assistance to manage other financial needs. The key marketing messages we've focused on reinforce our commitment to providing sophisticated solutions, capabilities and advice with high-touch delivery in the context of deep relationships and excellent customer service.

One example of this commitment is the Commerce Bank CONNECT® mobile app experience, where we deliver a high-touch customer experience from customers' smartphones. The mobile app offers customers a "banker in their pocket"—not an automated bot, but a real, live person who can provide personalized advice. After downloading the app, customers can select a banker by specialty, location or whatever best fits their financial needs. They can message their banker anytime, anywhere to ask questions and get answers.

The mobile app example and all our marketing messages reflect our brand tone aspirations:

- ***Simple****—making things simple and more intuitive. Our nearly five-star rating in the mobile app store tells us we're delivering well on this tone aspiration.*
- ***Human****—providing friendly, relatable and people-focused service, such as the Commerce Bank CONNECT app that puts a banker in customers' pockets.*
- ***Sincere****—helping in ways that truly make a difference. For example, we've implemented a grace period to allow additional time to remedy overdrafts, and we've developed flexible payment options.*
- ***Strategic****—knowing our clients and what's important to them so that we can personalize the solution. Empowering our team with an artificial intelligence–guided tool to better understand customer needs—both now and in the future—and pairing it with the right solutions allows us to deliver on this promise.*

How has brand marketing played a role in your strategy this year?

This year more than ever, when the industry felt the ripple effect of bank closures, we leveraged Commerce Bank's message of strength and stability. We have a consistent and authentic brand that reflects an engaged team and a best-in-class culture that we have shaped for nearly 160 years. We have been there for our customers to celebrate life's beautiful milestones and are available when things get tough. Because we are in a relationship business, our team members are key to bringing our brand to life. We're only at our best when our team members are at their best. We invest in a variety of programs and activities designed to enhance their professional development.

> "To better target and reach key audiences, you've got to be relevant. Being relevant requires using data insights to better understand customer needs, ensuring your message is reaching the customer when it matters to them."

How are you leveraging data and analytics to better target and reach key audiences?

To better target and reach key audiences, you've got to be relevant. Being relevant requires using data insights to better understand customer needs, ensuring your message is reaching the customer when it matters to them. We continue to invest in marketing systems that help us collect, manage and act on customer data. When this is put into practice, you can personalize when, how and why the marketing message is being delivered to each customer and be truly relevant.

With a greater reliance on data and technology, how have you grown your collaboration with IT and data leaders at your organization?

Sharing a common purpose makes any relationship stronger and collaboration efforts more successful. We exist to help our customers focus on what matters most. Fundamental to taking care of our customers is our ability to have data that informs us on what they are thinking, doing and feeling. We have the technology to serve and communicate with them through their preferred channels. Collaboration with IT and data leaders allows us to respond to and anticipate changing customer preferences.

As the need for technology resources has increased, so has the need to better communicate, collaborate and prioritize with our IT partners. Technology resources are limited, so we meet regularly to find better ways to work together to make ongoing investments in programs and products that serve our customers, strengthen our communities and support a healthy work environment for our team members.

What customer-centric messages are you emphasizing?

We're emphasizing what the customer wants by leveraging first-party data to deliver the right messages, at the right time and through the right channel. Customers are telling us they want it all, and we're up for that challenge. You can expect to see us emphasize messages that remind the customer how we help them achieve their financial goals because of our continued investments in our branches, customer care center, digital experiences and team. I'm proud to be part of a culture that rallies every area of the bank to discover new ways to unlock our full customer-focus potential and imagine new possibilities. There's more to come.

POWERING SMART DECISIONS.

Driving Customer Growth in 2023

A BAI SPECIAL REPORT PRESENTED BY SALESFORCE

BAI Executive Report

Meeting the challenge of new customer acquisition »

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