

**"Good employees quit when management is bad.  
Bad employees quit when management is good."**

**»Peter Drucker**

## Club Nostradamus



For at least the past twenty years, we have been inundated with stories (and wishcasting) of the imminent demise of physical branches.

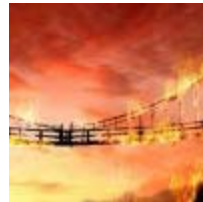
The usual suspects greet any story of an institution closing branches as evidence that their predictions are coming true...if...oh...a decade or two late.

A line I recently read from a media consultant named Greg Baroth had me smiling and thinking about branch predictions over the past 20 years.

He said, "1998: In 20 years we'll have flying cars. 2018: We literally have to tell people not to eat Tide Pods."

I do notice, however, that quite a few pundits either move the bar or hope that no one remembers their previous wrong

## Playing the Long Game



I recently had the opportunity of reconnecting with a former boss over lunch.

It was great to joke about old times in a more relaxed and open manner than I would have dared when he had the ability to fire me years ago.

(Yes, I did point that out to him.)

Looking back, I've had a dozen or so bosses throughout my career. This one was one of the most influential on my career, and, bar none, the hardest on me.

People in our bank told me that he was only hard on the people he believed had potential and whom he actually liked.

I remember responding, "Well, I wish he would stop liking me so much."

predictions - as they boldly make new ones.

Members of the “branches are dead” brain trust have been scratching their heads over the past week as one of the largest, most respected banks in the country announced plans to open 400 new branches over the next five years.

Now, this bank has also invested as much as any financial institution on its online and mobile products in recent years.

Yet, they are looking to increase their physical branch network by 8% over the next five years.

To many tech promoters and online banking zealots, this does not compute. (Pardon the pun.)

I would suggest that it does. In a world of increasingly ubiquitous and improving technology, it will become nearly impossible to differentiate on technology alone.

All (or nearly all) will have it and all (or nearly all) will be very good.

Banking technology will continue to improve and will be table stakes to remain competitive. It will serve to level the playing field far more than slant it.

The same is true of competing on price. Too many options and too many tough competitors exist to plan on differentiating by price over the long haul.

Physical presence in markets matters now as much as ever, even as the

Over the course of lunch, I kidded with him about some of the people I worked with in that organization that I really didn't care for.

It was only after a few years that I realized I likely had given them every bit as much reason not to like me as well.

He said, “You were young. You were an idiot. You had to learn to play the long game.”

Well, I was glad to see that he must still really like me.

As our conversation turned to advice we'd give young(er) bankers about their careers, we both agreed that there is almost never a case to be made for openly “burning a bridge” with a co-worker or supervisor.

It's a big world and a big industry. Yet, it seems to get small again at inopportune times.

I kidded that I can think of maybe three people over the course of 20 years that I absolutely swore off and was probably a little too open and public about doing it.

And wouldn't you know it, my career intertwined with two of those folks again years down the road. That's...uh... no fun.

The same can be said for customer relationships that may, for whatever reason, turn south.

Professionally handling unpleasant situations with customers or potential

number of locations necessary for an optimal footprint may fluctuate.

Will we see branch closures in years to come? Yes, we absolutely will.

We will also see branch openings, remodels, and increasingly tech-assisted hybrid branches in new settings, some only now on drawing boards across the industry.

At the center of it all will be our people - and the companies who employ and retain the best people will win.

You can hold me to that prediction.

customers today quite frequently pays off down the road.

We pay a lot of attention to the first impressions we make on people. However, I'd argue that the last impression you have made on a person matters far more.

It's the placeholder they have in their minds since they last interacted with you - whether that is a few days or a few years.

Acting cordially and professionally (even when it seems unjustified) is not submissiveness.

It shows you are smart enough to overlook today's irritations and play the far more important long game.

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**"Hyper-competitive people are not selfish and they are not greedy. They delight in helping other competent people become accomplished." »Jordan Peterson**



*Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.*