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**"The more panic grows, the more uplifting the image of a person who refuses to bow to it." » Ernst Junger**



## A Branch Bias?

I often come across columns and survey results that give me pause. Sometimes, it's because the findings or summaries don't concur with my belief or understanding of a subject.

That has happened frequently over the past decade as the "branches are going away" mantra (largely driven by vendors) was picked up by so many financial services publications.

Don't get me wrong. There are almost always valid points in their projections.

However, many things I witness happening in the industry, as well as learn from speaking directly with banking leaders, often undermine those doomsday claims.

Other times, I need to pump the brakes a bit when I find myself agreeing too easily with a survey or research results.

Confirmation bias is real and can be a real obstacle to making wise decisions.

We've likely all worked for or around folks who seem to pick and choose the information they decide to believe.

Things that support the narratives in their minds are highlighted and acted upon.



## Rock Star Attitude

I enjoy reading or hearing interviews with people who seem to "get it."

The subject matter can be any number of things. It might be business, sports, entertainment, education, or whatever.

It's that moment when you sense that a person has a great perspective on what he or she does.

It often shines a light on why they are successful at whatever that is.

I had such a moment last week listening to a clip from an interview with Johnny Rzeznik and Robby Takac of Goo Goo Dolls.

I have a running joke/debate with my sons about Goo Goo Dolls being the most underrated band of the past 30 years.

When one of my sons prefaced a comment about another band with, "I know, I know...their body of work doesn't compare to Goo Goo Dolls," I felt like my lobbying efforts were working.

In this clip, Robby responded to a question about whether they ever get tired of playing the hits their fans expect at every show.

Matters that challenge their beliefs are either rejected or ignored completely.

When discussing these issues with folks, I point out that things like a confirmation bias doesn't make you a bad person. It makes you a person.

We all tend to have them.

My agreement while reading a recent column by Amit Aggarwal of J.D. Power triggered my own confirmation bias alerts.

Just because you agree with a survey doesn't mean it's right. (But I think it is.)

Aggarwal notes that their recent research indicates that as customers transition away from the branch to digital-only relationships, overall satisfaction scores drop.

Think about that for a moment.

As banks move more customers toward digital, overall satisfaction of these customers falls.

Intriguingly, the largest drops appear to occur with Millennials. Smart folks can debate why that might be, but it's not a small thing.

Does this mean we're as branch-centric as ever? No, it doesn't.

Only the most detached among us would deny that digital technology has become integral to customers.

However, it would require equal detachment not to realize that customers remain committed to physical branch and banker access.

Branches and technology aren't competitors.

They are compliments to what remains the true element at the center of successful banks: engaged and helpful bankers.

He first acknowledged how fortunate they were to have the jobs they have. They never take it for granted.

He said, "You know, it may be the 10,000<sup>th</sup> time we play certain songs, but it's the first time lots of folks in the audience have experienced them live. They paid to be there. They showed up. It's our job to make it special for them. They make it new for us."

Listening to a successful musician – an actual rock star – explain that he understands and appreciates his job highlighted to me why they continue to draw crowds (customers) today.

I couldn't help but think of one of my mantras to bankers throughout the years.

The highest-ranking people in any branch, store, workplace, etc. are the ones not being paid to be there.

They're called customers, and they are the people who make our jobs and our ability to take care of the most important people, things, and causes in our lives possible.

Customers are not tasks. They are not the necessary drudgery of getting through our workdays.

They are, in fact, the very reason we are blessed to have workdays.

Most customers are fantastic to work with. Some may be a little less so.

But they all make what we do and what we accomplish possible.

Customers do not exist because our jobs exist. Our jobs exist because customers choose us.

Show them today, in word and action, that you fully realize and appreciate that fact.

**"The big talent is persistence."**

**» Octavia Butler**

*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.*

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