**Independent Banker**

**Flourish**

**June 2022**

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“Healthy debate helps us achieve an outcome where we’re all pushed to think beyond what might be readily in front of us."

[body]

When’s the last time you left a meeting and found yourself saying, “I never thought about it that way before!”? For me, the answer allows me to gauge how much I’ve successfully encouraged differing viewpoints. If I’m not asking myself this question regularly, it’s a red flag that I need to be looking for new ways to welcome input.

As leaders, it’s our job to create a culture that celebrates and harnesses differing perspectives. But it’s not about discussion for discussion’s sake; it’s about broadening our mindsets. Healthy debate helps us achieve an outcome where we’re all pushed to think beyond what might be readily in front of us. This openness to doing things differently and hearing new ideas naturally invites more discussion on topics you may never have realized were there.

Open dialogue is important, because as a community bank, no two scenarios are exactly alike. Having a team that offers a variety of different opinions will allow a bank to think creatively to problem solve. It creates a space where employees ask, “Is this OK, or are we missing an opportunity?” and “How can we better meet the needs of the community?”. When you have an environment where it’s OK to disagree, you develop a dedicated team, which yields a better outcome.

In addition, healthy debate introduces an element of fun into strategy. When done right, it’s engaging, stimulating and inspiring. It also leads to a culture of excellence where staff are encouraged to question the status quo and stretch the organization so it can grow to new heights.

Take the 40 Under 40 featured in this month’s issue. None of these leaders received the distinction by doing things the way they’ve always been done; they learned to be leaders through example, through education—at events like our LEAD FWD Summit—and through their own experiences. This has driven them to challenge their banks and teams to do better and be better. That makes them shining stars, and it also speaks volumes about the culture their banks have created.

Thinking about our leadership team at ICBA, I’m grateful for the discussions we have. Our complementary perspectives have helped us continue to grow to better serve the needs and interests of our members, and I know all of you seek the same for your communities. So, let’s use this as a call to action to keep finding the fun in questioning the status quo. I’m certain it will help us continue to flourish.

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**Where I’ll be this month**

I can’t believe I’m saying this, but I will be attending my eldest daughter’s high school graduation! I’ll also be traveling to a series of meetings for ICBA Bancard, TCM Bank, ICBA Reinsurance and ICBA Securities, and attending the Community Bankers of West Virginia Convention.