Independent Banker  
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Columns

[tag] Flourish

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As community bankers, we have all heard or experienced firsthand that tragic story of a customer who fell victim to a fraudster. They were looking for a quick win or a friend and were deceived by a too-good-to-be-true scenario that turned out to be just that.

But for every story like this, we have several success stories, where our community banking teams were able to stop fraud in its tracks. Consider the teller who noticed out-of-the-ordinary customer behavior and talked to the customer and their family. Or the IT team member who championed risk mitigation software that stopped a potential attack. This is where community banking excels, because we pay attention to the details to protect our customers and the bank. It’s yet another reason why our agile, relationship-based business model works.

And in today’s landscape, it’s more important than ever to have that connection to our customers. Look at [the rise in check fraud](https://www.icba.org/newsroom/blogs/main-street-matters/2023/06/12/how-community-banks-can-combat-the-rise-of-check-fraud) as an example. Basic fraud attacks like check washing is new again, enabled partly by more advanced digital technology that makes it hard to catch. That’s where education serves a critical role. We need to continue our training, no matter how long we’ve been in this business, to identify threats and prepare ourselves, our staff and our customers for what’s possible and what’s potentially next.

Think about the times you have been shocked by a fraud attempt at your bank or heard a story of something that happened at another bank. It’s not conceptual in that moment; it becomes clear that these attacks are happening all the time, all around us.

As you read this month’s issue and explore ideas for bolstering your bank’s risk mitigation efforts, I encourage you to reach out to your peers via [ICBA Community](https://community.icba.org/users/sign_in?return_to=https:%2F%2Fcommunity.icba.org%2Fmain%2Fgroups%2F72279%2Flounge). Whether it’s to ask about a particular technology, hear what others are seeing as far as fraud, or connect on trainings (see sidebar), your community banking colleagues are your best resource in this fight against fraud.

While fraud will continue, we are our own best defense, and uniting efforts as a community of community bankers will make the greatest impact yet.

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**CBU for cyber education**

Community Banker University (CBU) offers education to support cybersecurity needs:

* Nov. 9 Webinar: “Protection of Confidential Proprietary Business Information”
* 23+ online courses on information security, including Phishing Awareness and Social Engineering
* ICBA’s IT Institute (October 2023), Bank Security Institute (February 2024) and Fraud Seminar (April 2024).

Visit [icba.org/education](https://www.icba.org/education) for more information.

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Where I’ll be this month

I’ll be on the road doing bank visits, meeting with our leadership bankers and spending some time with our affiliated state association partners—with risk mitigation a sure topic in each one.

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