**Independent Banker**

**From the Top**

**June 2022**

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“Community continuation is not about checking a regulatory box; it means putting a name to the people who will be the future of our banks.”

[body]

One of my favorite sayings my dad passed onto me is also a motto I live by: “How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life, you will have been all of these.”

This advice led me to a new way of contemplating leadership. My journey to this position didn’t start with me knowing what to do; it took the wisdom of others to guide me. It’s our teams—our employees in every level of the organization, with their varied experiences, strengths and skills—who help us grow as leaders and as banks.

That’s why as we consider our future, we need to do so with our people top of mind. In our bank, we have retired the phrase “succession planning” and replaced it with “community continuation.” Our up-and-coming leaders will be the ones to provide service to our customers and communities in the future. That’s really who we’re talking about when we look at the future of our banks.

And how we invest in our people now will make or break our community continuation plans. For example, when we take time to explain why we’re doing what we’re doing, we’re educating our staff on the bank’s strategy and processes. Whether it is underwriting a loan, writing up a credit memo, detailing a purchase of an investment security or analyzing a profit and loss statement, staff must look at more than their individual responsibilities. Our future leaders must see the bigger picture for our banks to be successful.

As we prepare for what’s to come, the more specific we can be, the better. Community continuation is not about checking a regulatory box; it means putting a name to the people who will be the future of our banks. Bringing them in on our vision also will strengthen their ties to us and create an even more dedicated team.

Spreading this concept of community continuation has risen to become one of my primary goals as chairman. So, as you read this month’s issue, featuring emerging community bank leaders, I hope you will consider how you can redefine traditional succession planning and grow your own vision for community continuation.

We all want our communities to continue being healthy and vibrant for the next generation, and when we shift our mindset and put people in full view, we become the quintessential community continuators. But, as my favorite quote says, how far we go depends upon how we treat the people along our path.

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[sidebar] My top three

**Checklist for effective community continuation**

* 1. Create a culture of continuation like you would of compliance.
  2. Select future leaders by identifying employees who embody your values.
  3. Seek out consultants who support the mission of community banks.