Independent Banker  
June 2023  
Columns

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[quote] In an industry overwhelmed with financial performance and earnings, community banks shine by focusing on what matters: the people and communities they serve.

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Community banks are the financial center of our communities, and we’re invaluable to the success of those we serve. But we can’t take our eyes off the ball and let that prominent position elevate our sense of importance. Community banks want and need to be approachable, to ensure our customers and communities feel comfortable and at home with us.

Because a true leader is one who doesn’t seek to lead but rather leads by example, by giving back. For community banks, it’s not about the position, authority or power, but about what we can do for others. That’s how we set ourselves apart in our communities: We focus on giving, not taking; on serving, not being served.

This life lesson of humility and service has been demonstrated for me as far back as I can recall, and it has driven me to where I am today. I grew up in a very small town, and my dad was the premier homebuilder for our community. He was well known, was often asked to take on leadership roles, and as young builders emerged, they looked to him as a mentor. He helped them learn and grow—even though they were competing with him for work. The future of our community was more important to him than any specific job or project, and he believed in helping others to better themselves: the hallmark of a true leader.

That selfless approach of focusing on the greater good was tremendously inspiring to me as a young man. I learned you don’t necessarily set out to lead. You lead because you provide an example that someone wants to follow.

That responsibility never ends. It’s not a part-time job; it’s a way of being that makes all the difference. You’re always growing, evolving and working to do better and be better. Every great leader has a mentor to follow, to help them become the next best version of themselves.

It’s why I’m so proud to be a community banker today. In an industry overwhelmed with financial performance and earnings, community banks shine by focusing on what matters: the people and communities they serve. We have been through all kinds of economic cycles, both ups and downs. Our banking model responds to the changing environment and adapts to support new demands.

Because that’s what leaders do: They stand strong for those they serve. From that perspective, I can confidently say community banks are poised for continued success. Our focus is on people, and that approach will always prevail.

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*Quote of the month*

“Someone’s sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.”

—[*Warren Buffett*](https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/31507-someone-s-sitting-in-the-shade-today-because-someone-planted-a)*, investor*

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