

Industry Magazine Article "Ears to the Ground"

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A New Name and Mission—Kandy Hunter, David Haithcock and Caroline Johnson of the new California Community Banking Network.

How a California community banking association changed its tune

Everyone loves to reference and praise companies like Apple Inc. and Google Corp. for their business ingenuity and ability to sell a product, without having to sell. It's this kind of brand recognition and community development that all hungry businesses crave and try to model. Times have changed, and if you aren't listening to your customer you will miss out.

In California, a traditional banking association is changing after listening to its community bank members and keeping its eyes on the business environment. Starting in April, the California Independent Bankers® (CIB), the state association for community banks in California, began transforming into the California Community Bankers Network®.

In 1984, the California office of the ICBA, the California Independent Bankers, was created as both the regional office for the national association and an association for community bankers in the state. On its own, CIB offered a host of services, such as statehouse lobbying, products, and

seminars and conferences—all the services you would expect from a state association for community banks. While the association evolved over the years, it recognized that the products and programs that previously brought value to community banks in California, needed to change to meet the needs of a dramatically different business environment and consumer culture.

As part of the redevelopment, members were asked, “What do you want from us?” We listened, and the new nonprofit California Community Bankers Network, or CCBN for short at www.ccbnetwork.org, was born. Not surprisingly, community bankers in The Golden State said they wanted more from their state membership organization. They still needed high-quality education, but wanted it on their terms—timely, easily accessed, cost effective and most of all convenient. In addition to traditional advocacy in the state of California and on national issues, members wanted access to industry experts in the fields of marketing, compliance, leadership, social media and other critical business topics.

“The key component to the new CCBN is built right into the name, the ability to network,” says David Haithcock, CCBN’s executive vice president and executive director. Community bankers statewide are now set up to share, exchange and interact throughout the year during strategically arranged meetings designed to increase communication among the state’s community bankers.

The redevelopment led ICBA to provide a new business focus for serving California community bankers, which:

- Emphasizes networking among community bankers in California through peer opportunities, roundtables, and live and broadcasted seminars;
- Captures a multilayered community bank audience;
- Highlights resources in response to member-specific needs, allowing community banks to drive their membership power by choosing the benefits and discounts that they find valuable;
- Listens and grows with members as needs and demands change based on technology, legislation and regulation, generational differences and California demographics; and
- Provides relevant and innovative education and training for the community banking professional through live seminars, video streaming and webinars.

CCBN’s continuous goal is to be responsive to the changing landscape of community banking in California. Although this is just the beginning, the results have been positive. CCBN’s members have increased participation in the network’s programs, and there is a fresh new energy moving forward.



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