

Consumer

How to CHOOSE BANKING SERVICES

-Get the most bank for your buck!

Top Five Things You Should Know About Your Bank...

1. **Do they have the financial products and services you need?**
2. **Are there hidden fees?**
3. **Do they care about you, not just your money?**
4. **Are they convenient enough for your lifestyle?**
5. **Do they support your community?**

There are many factors to consider when choosing a bank. Some consumers think that all banks are the same; others are lured by free checking offers and giveaways. But there's a lot more to think about than what you can get for free. What else should you be looking for in a bank?

What do you need?

Banks have most of the basics in common – checking, savings, loans. But it's important to think about what you'll need from your bank now and in the future. Ask your banker what types of different accounts they offer, but also look for other things you might need, such as

- *A checking account that lets you to write all the checks you need*
- *Availability of accounts and services for your business*
- *Loans for your business, home, or personal use*
- *Retirement and investment accounts*
- *Monthly account maintenance fees*
- *Minimum balance requirements*
- *Overdraft protection*
- *Online banking*
- *Direct deposit*

What are you REALLY paying?

Some banks will offer free checking accounts – and some of these accounts can really work well for people. But be sure to check the small print. Often times, you'll pay no maintenance fee for the checking account but much more than usual if you bounce a check. Watch out for hidden fees, too, like those charged for talking to a banker in a branch or on the phone.

Personal Service

When looking for a bank, it's important that they treat you like a person and care about what happens to you and your financial life. Banking is a very personal thing, and your money is nothing to take lightly. Be aware of the service that you receive when choosing a bank, and make sure you feel comfortable with the people delivering that service. It's essential that your bank values the person carrying the wallet more than how much is in that wallet.

Convenience

Convenience is a matter of taste. Some people need an ATM on every corner; others never visit a branch and do all of their banking online. Think about how you do your banking. If you use

a check card or write checks for most of your purchases, then you may want easy deposit options like direct deposit or a branch close to your work. If you use a lot of cash, you may be looking for local ATMs. Decide how you like to bank – and if you're not sure if your bank is convenient enough, tell them what you want and see if they can offer suggestions.

Community Driven

The character of a bank is often reflected in how they give back to the community. And not just any community – yours. If your bank offers financial support to local organizations and events, and encourages volunteerism among its employees, they're displaying their commitment and care for the community. And choosing a bank based on local community support is important, because it allows that bank to continue its good works.

Consider what's important to you before you choose a bank. Look for an organization that provides the products you need, the service you want, and the dedication you and your family deserve.