Bank Introduces Interactive Teller

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FISHERS -

Do you prefer the convenience of the ATM or the personal touch of a teller?

A new trend in banking is promising to offer both, and an Indianapolis-based bank is leading the way.

It's called the "interactive teller"--or video bank teller. And Indianapolis-based Salin Bank is the first to offer it in Indiana.

"It's definitely the future of banking," says Lea Kelley, Vice President and Business Development Officer for Salin. "It allows customers to do all kinds of transactions outside of regular business hours."

All while talking with a "real" person.

Here's how it works.

The bank customer utilizes a machine that looks similar to an ATM. But instead of numbers on the screen, the customer is connected to a "live" teller, located at a banking call center.

"Peter" answered the call when I pushed the "start" button at the Salin drive-up location in Fishers. He explained he's one of five tellers working out of a phone bank in West Lafayette.

"We're able to help any way a regular teller can," Peter told me as we were connected on the video screen. "The only thing we can't do is process statements out of this. But we'll be rolling that out really soon."

This is an attempt to have the ATM and personal experience all in one, according to University of Indianapolis finance expert Matt Will. "You're going to talk to a person," Will said. "So if you have a problem or something that doesn't fit a computer screen, you can talk to an individual."

While Salin is the first in Indiana to offer the service, other banks are also testing it out at branches in major cities across the globe. Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase and some credit unions are among those that have also tested the new feature.

Will isn't sure it's a service with staying power. "Customers either bank online or go to a teller," he said. "There is really nothing in between. This is an attempt to bridge the gap. Will it be successful? It's still to be determined."

Will contends people who prefer the personal touch of a bank teller like the idea of going to the same teller for their needs. The randomness of the video teller may not satisfy that need.

But Peter, our Salin teller, admits some customers have requested him. And he is happy to oblige, adding, "Customers really do like it".