

How banks are boosting customers' uptake of financial wellness tools

Article

The trend: Customers say in surveys that **they want to improve their financial wellness**—but when banks and credit unions give financial tips in social media posts, newsletters, or online courses, customers often don't take them up on it.

Do customers really want what they say they want? That's the question raised by a Personetics [survey](#) commissioned by Forrester Research, which found **88% of banks and credit unions surveyed said that less than half of their customers actively use the tools they provide.**

- 32% of respondents said 5% to 24% of their customers use the tools.
- 56% said 25% to 49% of their customers use the tools.
- Only 12% of banks and credit unions said 50% to 100% of their customers use the tools.

Earlier, a different Personetics survey found that **58% of respondents would switch to a financial institution that offers financial health features, such as helping them budget smarter and save more.**

What can banks do? To address the clear disconnect, here are four ways to promote and drive greater customer engagement with financial wellness offerings, per the Financial Brand.

1. Financial wellness must become a core strategy: Financial health-related content and advice isn't just an accessory or a nice-to-have. Articles and social media posts designed to improve financial literacy are worthwhile to promote the bank's brand. But by themselves, they can't tackle a complex issue like helping people achieve financial health or alleviate the stress people feel about their finances during a cost-of-living crisis.

- The Spanish bank **BBVA** sends customers text messages based on their income, expenses, and debt. For example, a customer who can cover monthly expenses with some cushion will receive messages about investing to generate returns. Those who struggle to curtail their spending may receive messages related to saving money.
- More than 11.7 million of its customers globally have used its digital financial health tools as of the end of 2021, a 48% increase from a year earlier (the latest data shared).

2. Give consumers hope: Your campaigns must reassure customers and offer empathy. For instance, though millennials and Gen Zers want to own a home, they're not sure they'll ever be able to afford one. To give them hope, banks need to dig into their data and determine how they can serve each customer, creating touchpoints to offer the right piece of content at the right time.

- **Bank of America's** Life Plan tool lets customers set short- and long-term goals like saving for a vacation or buying a home, then track their progress. Customers also receive personalized guidance and recommendations on steps to take to advance their goals.
- Ten million customers have used LifePlan through March 2023, and it's led to 2.3 million followup appointments.

3. Focus on what customers actually want: Don't jump in with financial wellness content you think customers may find interesting. Start by asking them what they want and then distribute that content through varied channels. Consumer focus groups and audience research will help identify which financial topics resonate the most.

- The nonprofit counseling firm **GreenPath Financial Wellness** reports that consumers looked for strategies for managing debt and coping with inflation and rising interest rates. It also found that webinars, blog posts, and guides pull the highest engagement rates.

4. Measure the impacts of financial wellness efforts: Look into outcomes as well as customers' level of engagement through open-rate metrics. For example, analyze whether those who complete an online course on budgeting have fewer overdrafts, an increase in emergency savings, or a decrease in overall debt load. Look into whether consumers who watched a video series show different behaviors from those who completed a written course.