Point of View

Well-Timed Words: Monthly Statements Can Enhance Consumer Engagement

In a fast-moving "want it now" world, people don't distinguish among channels. Neither should financial institutions. Consumers are using all channels through multiple devices, and they expect a consistent, satisfying experience no matter how they engage, whether through paper or digital channels, or both. It's up to financial institutions to meet and leverage those expectations.

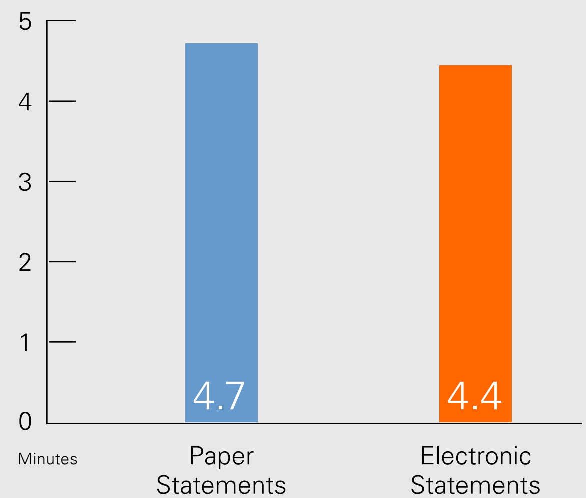
Despite the speed at which people move through their lives, there are moments when they pause and take note. Financial institutions know those moments present an opportunity to interact with consumers in a way that enhances their engagement and overall experience, whether in the branch, online or through other channels.

Transactional communications are a prime example. In a world so focused on immediacy, it might seem counterintuitive to think people still spend significant time with statements. But transactional documents, such as monthly financial statements, are still important and widely read, both in digital and paper formats.

In fact, the estimated median amount of time consumers spend looking at their paper checking and savings statements is 4.7 minutes, according to recent consumer research by Fiserv. The 2019 Expectations & Experiences: Household Finances survey also showed consumers spend an estimated median time of 4.4 minutes reading those same statements in electronic form.

That can amount to more than 56 minutes per year reading paper statements and more than 52 minutes with electronic statements. People are engaged with their finances; they just want to do it on their terms.

Estimated Median Time Consumers Spend Reading Checking and Savings Statements

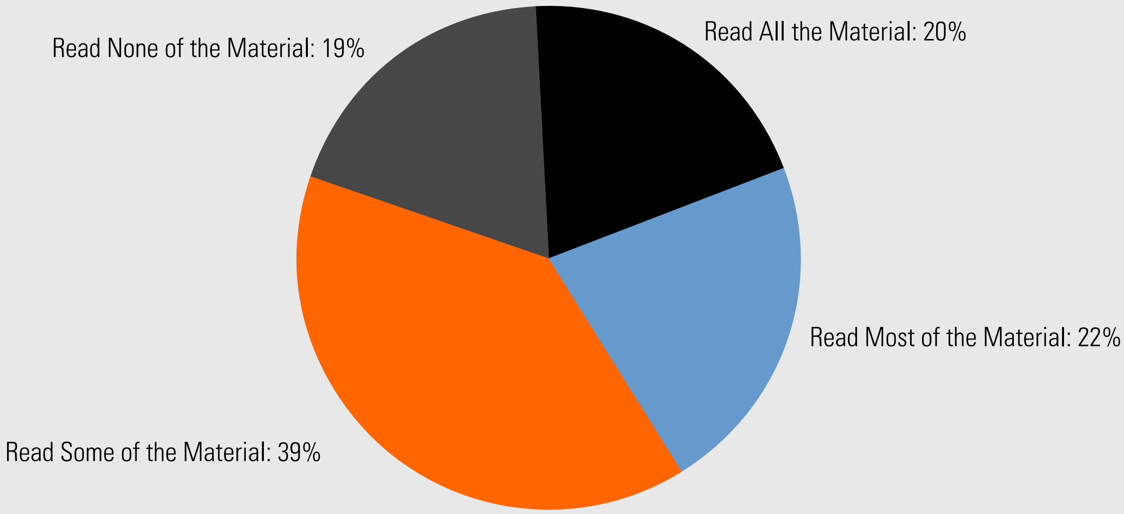


Source: Expectations & Experiences: Household Finances, Fiserv, 2019

How many other channels can claim such a willingly captive and connected audience? Transactional documents are far more than compliance necessities. They can form the backbone of consumer marketing and communications outreach.

Across the board, people are engaged with all types of transactional documents. The 2019 Expectations & Experiences research, for instance, showed the majority of consumers read at least some of the printed material delivered by mail with debit cards.

Consumer Engagement With Documents Accompanying Most Recently Mailed Debit Card



Source: Expectations & Experiences: Household Finances, Fiserv, 2019

Make the Message Count

Statements, bills and other transactional documents are valuable touchpoints in the overall consumer experience framework. Expectations & Experiences research showed that 37 percent of consumers remember seeing personalized messages on their statements or bills.

When it involves the digital experience, the more people engage in personalized interactions that anticipate their financial needs, the higher the bar is set for consumers' engagement in other channels, such as IVR or in the branch. Of course, online and mobile continue to outpace the branch in how often consumers actually access their finances. However, the larger point is that the high regard in which people still hold tangible interactions reinforces the need for a holistic consumer experience.

The same approach applies to communications through transactional documents. The method of delivery matters far less than the message. People want to choose how they receive communications, and financial institutions simply need to ensure all their channels are strong enough to meet consumers' constantly rising expectations.

No matter the channel through which they're delivered, transactional document communications give financial institutions a crucial platform to actively interact with their accountholders. And when that monthly correspondence is on target, the benefits are plentiful.

Financial institutions can amplify their brands with consistent communications, increase engagement and loyalty by directing specific information to accountholders, reduce unnecessary call center calls and boost revenue by cross-selling products and services.

Steppingstone to Deeper Engagement

The message, though, has to resonate if financial institutions want to enhance consumer engagement.

Personalizing the content, for instance, lets accountholders know the financial institution is speaking directly to them. That could mean calling out a specific life event or offering a service that is relevant to them.

The key is to listen to what consumers want. In return, they'll listen to you. That might include capturing accountholder interest by using color and clear branding, or partitioning the content and drawing attention to promotional or educational information. Financial institutions can add QR codes to the documents linking to websites or special offers, creating a more seamless bridge between channels.

Monthly correspondence through transactional documents also can inform accountholders about new services such as notification and alert options, potential fraud activity, fee avoidance or account access changes. These communications enhance relationships with consumers by empowering them and deepening their trust in the financial institution.

And that, in turn, strengthens the relevance of the transactional document communications no matter how they are delivered.

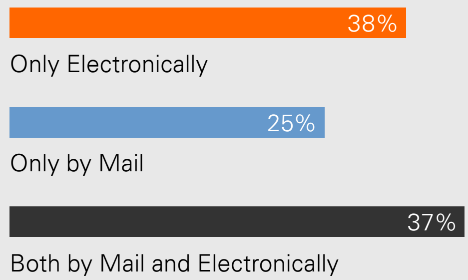
Consumers Use All Channels

Financial institutions looking through the lens of consumers know people like all of the channels and are going to use the one that best meets their needs in any given instant.

There is well-merited excitement around mobile, but that increasing immediacy does not necessarily come at the expense of other communication channels. Paper remains a relevant avenue through which consumers access and use statements, despite the growing use and acceptance of digital communications.

Expectations & Experiences research showed 38 percent of respondents receive checking, savings, money market or CD statements electronically, 25 percent by mail and 37 percent receive both paper and electronic.

Consumer Preferences in Receiving Checking, Savings, Money Market or CD Statements



Source: Expectations & Experiences: Household Finances, Fiserv, 2019

If current paper suppression rates continue, we can expect only half of all consumers to have discontinued paper transactional documents by 2022. Financial institutions will need to support multiple modalities for the foreseeable future.

Consumers are challenged with the day-to-day race to keep up with their lives. They want providers to understand their preferences and to connect with them wherever and whenever they choose.

Financial institutions have an opportunity to meet people at that point of convenience – when they are ready to listen – and position themselves to drive meaningful engagement and loyalty.

About the Author

Director of Brand Management Chris Chronis is responsible for developing and implementing strategies to strengthen the Fiserv corporate brand. Chronis joined the company in 2009. He has spent more than 30 years in the financial services industry, including 20 in the customer communications management segment focusing on marketing, competitive intelligence, strategic planning and product development.

Connect With Us

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