

## **Listening to the Net Generation**

By

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If you are a football fan, perhaps you noticed an IBM commercial that was frequently run during the nationally telecast games. Frantic business executives come to the conclusion that someone has stolen all the computer equipment out of their data facility. They are then greeted by a nerdy, bespectacled kid eating a sandwich who tells them that the computers haven't been stolen at all. Instead, they have all been replaced by a single server running the linux operating system. The advertisement tries to make the point about getting "it". "It" being technology. The commercial pokes fun at the business professionals who just don't get "it" as it makes the case for IBM.

Like the commercial, we as banking professionals often don't get "it" when it comes to technology. Why? Recently a banking manager in charge of a large technology implementation project told me he was fed up with the young computer people who had come into the organization. "These earring wearing techies think they know everything" he began. "Most of the time I have no idea what they are talking about. And, what they want to do is just not how we do it around here."

I was familiar with his staff and they were extremely talented. "My advice to you is to listen to them," I said. "If you want to understand what they are saying, then really listen to what they have to say. If you want to be more successful, then tap that potential and be open to do things differently." He replied, "Look I have a deadline to meet. I don't have time for some touchy-feely serendipity session."

Unfortunately, this scenario happens too often today. The result is a gaping void between the "net-generation" who thinks differently, and the traditional community banker. The key to getting "it" is listening. We may think we've all been there and done that. But technology has changed so rapidly, we are often looking at solutions today that will be obsolete in less than a year. And unless we have remarkable technical skills coupled with vision, we may find our own efficiency diminishing. Community bankers need to understand how the technology strategies they employ today can be a springboard to the solutions of the future. And there is no better way than listening to the ideas of young computer professionals who grew up with PC's and the Internet.

Instead of the linear thinking that looks for THE right answer to a technology issue, this generation often finds there are a variety of ways to get to the right answer. This is different than what we are used to doing, but quite effective. While it is enormously difficult trying to understand the folks who thrive on Linux and Dilbert, the benefits of simply listening are tremendous. The creative energy that this generation possesses just may be the kind of innovativeness your community bank needs in providing the best services for your customers.

BankLogic can help you bridge the gap between the net-generation and your management team. We have been in your shoes. We can help you tap the skills of your technology staff, while building on the profitability of tomorrow. We can assist your organization at all levels to think out of the box, to listen to each other, and to begin working toward a common vision.

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