



SAVINGS TIP: Major banks don't always offer good rates for your deposits. Compare interest rates and fees from different banks and credit unions in your area to find the right combination of convenience, service and growth for your money.

Fed Up With Big Banks?

CONSIDER MAKING THE SWITCH TO A COMMUNITY FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

As some of America's biggest banks start to charge monthly fees for services that used to be free — including the use of debit cards — many of their customers are re-thinking whether they want to do business with the megabanks.

In fact, so many people are fed up with the fees and poor customer service they have received from big banks that a movement has sprung up encouraging people to transfer their money to smaller, community based banks and credit unions.

In one of the most visible events, thousands of people pledged to move their money from big banks to small ones on Nov. 5, 2011. But, for many people, it makes sense to make the switch anytime.

SMALLER CAN BE BETTER

America's biggest banks have become symbols for poor customer service, often making it difficult to do something as simple as reaching a real human being on the phone.

Community banks and credit unions, on the other hand, will typically try harder to get your busi-

ness. They're owned and managed by people who live right in your community — your friends and neighbors, people you know — rather than faceless institutional shareholders scattered all around the world.

And when their stakeholders are right in town, community banks tend to make decisions that benefit the town directly. They spend money with local businesses, invest in projects that are important to your community, hire local people and donate to local causes.

That means your money is going to Main Street, not Wall Street.

TALK TO THE DECISION MAKERS

Another advantage of smaller banks and credit unions is that the boss is usually glad to talk with you directly.

Unlike the big national banks, where customer service might be outsourced overseas, you can easily talk to the people who are making decisions about your money when you walk in the door. They don't have to refer problems to managers you've never met or a headquarters building in New York.

IT'S EASY

Finally, community banks make it easy to switch accounts. If you're thinking about dumping your big bank, they can walk you through the simple process.



For free or not for free? That is the question.

Not all banks and credit unions are the same. See if your community banking center offers these services at no charge:

➤ Online banking ➤ Bill pay ➤ Checking accounts ➤ Business accounts