The American Bankers Association has released the following tips to help small business owners best position themselves to obtain small business bank loans. By building a mutually beneficial relationship with a bank, learning how to prepare for the loan process and effectively evaluating offers, small business owners will be better equipped to navigate today’s lending environment.

Get to know bankers at several financial institutions in your community.

Before requesting a loan, find out which financial institutions in your market make loans to firms like yours. Not all banks specialize in business loans. Some specialize in lending only to firms in certain industries. Others lend only to those in certain stages of the business life cycle (no startups, for example). Work with bankers who understand your industry and find out how the current financial crisis has affected credit availability in your community. Not all banks have been equally affected by today’s financial crisis.

Another reason to deal with banks experienced in your industry relates to the financial advice they can offer. Because these bankers work with firms facing the same industry-related problems that may challenge you, they’re in a better position to provide helpful advice and financial products tailored to your firm’s needs. Many times the advice a banker gives is far more important than the product or service they sell. Seek a banker who can give financial advice that will help you survive and thrive in today’s economy. In turn, you should reward that banker with your business and your loyalty.

Be able to articulate your firm’s “value proposition” to its target markets and your business plan to reach them.

If you can’t clearly articulate why other companies or customers should do business with you and how you’ll effectively compete in your chosen target market segments, the chances of getting a loan are slim. You want the banker to understand all three since you’re asking for support through good times and bad. Also, be prepared to discuss in detail the assumptions that underlie each of these scenarios.

Think like a banker.

Understand the risks of operating in your industry. Have a plan to mitigate those risks and share it with your banker. Bankers are going to do a risk analysis anyway, so it’s important to help them. Most likely, you can provide a perspective that the banker hasn’t considered. It’s important for the banker to see that you recognize the risks of operating in your industry and that you have a plan for dealing with them.

Develop at least two ways to repay the loan.

Bankers look for primary and secondary loan repayment sources. For the sake of your business, you should, too. You are in the best position to determine possible repayment alternatives. Be sure to discuss these options with your banker before the loan is made. Secondary repayment resources could include the pledging of business or personal collateral as well as the addition of a loan guarantee by the firm’s owners, suppliers or customers. The more certain that the banker has that the loan will be paid “as agreed,” the more likely it will be that you not only receive a favorable loan decision, but also the best interest rate. Smart business owners understand that now is the time to think about alternative repayment sources, not when their business gets into trouble.
A little more than ten years ago, we were given the opportunity to launch a new bank that would provide the businesses owners and professionals of San Diego something unique – a local business bank that offered higher levels of service and financial capacity with access to decision-makers. We assembled a team of seasoned banking professionals, and together, on May 23, 2003, we opened Torrey Pines Bank (TPB). Starting with $20 million in initial capital, a single office, seven employees and the support of our parent company Western Alliance (WAL), looking back, to say we succeeded beyond our expectations would be an understatement. Today, we have grown to 11 full-service offices, including expansion into the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay area markets, close to 250 full-time employees, and assets exceeding $2 billion.

Companies that reach a certain age are vulnerable to platitudes. Fortunately for us, we have achieved our growth by building an exceptional reputation. In 2012 we were one of only 35 California banks to be recognized by the Findley Reports for achieving “Super Premier” performance. In 2011, we were named Most Admired San Diego Company by San Diego Metro and Development Partner of the Year by the San Diego Housing Federation. And recently, we were honored as the Supplier Partner of the Year to the Neighborhood Market Association. I’ve also enjoyed the humbling experience of being named 2012 Most Admired CEO by a local business publication – an honor I accepted on behalf of the entire TPB and WAL team.

Along with our business success, we also take pride in our ability to contribute to the vitality of the community from which we started. We owe our success to the communities we call home and we welcome the opportunity to give back whenever we can. Like most banks, we are required to invest in the community, but we’re distinct in that we’ve donated over $2 million to local charities, and foster community and economic development as a part of our business strategy. As San Diego County’s number one community bank, SBA 504 lender for eight consecutive years¹, we know the impact our lending has for helping businesses create jobs and stimulate the local economy. Of course, being one of the fastest growing California and U.S. banking start-ups in the past ten years would have been impressive in good times; but, the near collapse of the financial markets and the general business slow-down of the Great Recession reversed many rising tides. And yet, through that turmoil, we kept growing and lending. In fact, during the height of the recession we experienced our greatest surge of lending to local businesses. We saw opportunities to serve more customers at a time when they were most in need of a conscientious financial partner.

How were we able to do this? Before there was an economic storm we adhered to the same prudent banking fundamentals we had when we started. We had a long term vision and protected it over short term interests. Our bedrock principles helped us remain viable for our clients.

It’s easy for me to imagine other companies and financial institutions being envious of our good fortune, but very little of our success is owed to sheer luck. From day one, every initiative, every decision, has been the result of a customer-centric strategy. We are led by an all-star team of seasoned bankers, and we tap their experience to provide careful guidance to our clients as we help advise them in their business thinking and consequences of such thought. We ask more questions and dive deeper into their businesses to fully understand their needs and challenges. We explore every opportunity and carefully consider all the possible consequences of the choices they may choose to make, and advise them accordingly.

Like our clients, we don’t like surprises, and as a result, we are rarely caught off guard by shifts in the market or economic turbulence. Setting aside all the financial metrics we could use to measure our success, we are most gratified that so many of our customers consider us valued partners in the growth of their endeavors. They trust us with their dreams, and we do our best to help bring those visions to fruition. Relationship banking is a profoundly satisfying business to be in.

While staying committed to core banking principles and growing to serve more clients, Torrey Pines Bank has never been about brick and mortar and cold business models. Our business is built on the values of honesty and integrity that lead us to fair dealings with our customers. These tenets allow us to evolve, grow, and expand with a compass that navigates us towards ethical conduct in business and our personal endeavors. These are uncompromising values that will help us endure over time. That is a very good thing because as we approach our ten-year anniversary, we’ll remind ourselves that as far as we have come, there is still much for us to learn about the communities and people we serve. There are still so many customers who can benefit from our approach, and so many new ways we can serve them, that are yet to be discovered. Our first ten years have been astounding, but it’s just a beginning – we’re just getting started.

¹ Small Business Administration

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Submitted by Torrey Pines Bank
By Gary Cady
CEO
Torrey Pines Bank
www.torreypinesbank.com

WHERE BUSINESS GETS DONE.
The Shamrock Group knew Torrey Pines Bank had the financial power and resources to transform their vision of The Plaza at the Border into reality. Their retail shopping center has brought $50 million in annual sales to the district, created 250 construction jobs and will create over 300 full and part time retail jobs.

At Torrey Pines Bank we bring your most complex projects vigor, financial support and a close relationship with local veteran bankers that brings peace of mind in all economic times.

NEED TO TALK ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS? TALK WITH US. | 858.523.4600

WHERE BUSINESS GETS DONE.
Today, nearly 50 percent of businesses are owned by women. And there’s one topic we hear over and over again: Obtaining financing is a daunting task. In fact, many business owners tell us they don’t know what resources are available to help them access capital. We want to help women business owners understand their options so they can get started and grow. Here are a few of the growing number of organizations that provide resources:

**Financial service providers that have a special focus on women-owned businesses:**

More and more financial institutions are adding services and programs specially geared toward helping women learn about financing options and how to obtain small business loans. At Wells Fargo, for example, we recently committed to lend $3.5 billion to women-owned businesses by 2020, in addition to offering financial education, advice and access to tools and other resources.

**U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)**

The SBA operates Women’s Business Centers across the country—a network of educational centers to assist women in starting and growing small businesses. When a business owner is ready for a loan, she may want to consider an SBA loan. SBA loan products, such as SBA 7(a) and 504 loans, can be good options for credit-worthy small business owners who may not be able to obtain conventional loans or loan terms that meet their business needs.

**National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) San Diego Chapter:**

NAWBO is a valuable resource helping to propel women business owners into greater economic, social and political spheres of power worldwide. When you’ve done your research, have all your documents, and can credibly answer your lender’s questions, you’ve greatly improved your chances of securing capital and launching your business. Also, make sure to take advantage of the available resources. The more you know about your options, the better chance of success.

**Why do you need it?**

Lenders are interested in knowing whether you’re seeking financing to solve a problem, or to seize an opportunity. Be prepared to explain clearly what you intend to do with the loan and why you expect the venture to succeed.

You should maintain a current business plan that evolves as your business grows. If you’re just getting started, you can find plenty of guidance on how to write one at Wells Fargo’s Business Insight Resource Center www.wellsfargobusinessinsights.com

**How will you repay your loan?**

You’ll need to start with a good understanding of your current financials and how much cash your business generates now. Then prepare cash flow projections. Include principal and interest payments in the forecasts, and keep the loan terms within bank policy guidelines.

If the loan is secured by collateral, be prepared to explain what tangible assets you can offer as a guarantee. In addition to collateral, how much cash will you personally put into the business? When outlining your debts and assets, include your personal financial information to help the lender get a sense of your personal financial stability.

**What are your unique qualifications?**

Finally, be prepared to discuss your own business qualifications. Because the success of a small business largely depends on leadership, your skills and knowledge are an important part of your company’s profile.

When you’ve done your research, have all your documents, and can credibly answer your lender’s questions, you’ve greatly improved your chances of securing capital and launching your business. Also, make sure to take advantage of the available resources. The more you know about your options, the better chance of success.

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Knowing your Local Banker: An Excellent Resource for Financing your Business

Although access to capital has been a challenge for businesses in recent years, particularly for smaller businesses, banks have proudly been and are standing ready to provide financing to help businesses expand, grow and manage their cash flow. The results of two recent California Bank & Trust (CB&T) surveys of small business owners showed that half of the respondents will seek additional capital this year to expand their business or increase staffing. This is refreshing news, suggesting that businesses continue to thrive and expand even after difficult economic times.

When it comes time to arrange for financing, who do you turn to?

One of the best ways to assure that you will be provided the right financing opportunities, pricing and terms is to build a relationship with a local banker who truly understands your specific needs and the unique challenges of doing business in the San Diego area. At CB&T, we specialize in business banking and are proud to call San Diego our home. We are the largest bank headquartered in San Diego with a 60-year tradition of serving local communities throughout the state – taking great pride in being voted ‘Best Bank’ by readers of the San Diego Union Tribune for two years in a row.

Access to Local Decision Makers

CB&T certainly offers a wide range of sophisticated financial solutions; however, it’s our professional expertise and dedication to building strong client relationships that best embodies our spirit of serving local San Diego businesses.

Our experienced business bankers are available to meet regularly with you and your team, to take a proactive role in understanding your business and industry, and to work with you to identify the financial solutions that best meet your business needs.

When it comes time to finance your business, the relationship you build with your bank and your banker can represent an important asset in raising the capital you need to expand your business – whether you’re looking for a loan, line of credit, SBA funding, or other financing solutions.

What’s more, we make lending decisions right here in San Diego, so you’ll have access to local decision makers who are available to discuss your needs and objectives directly with you.

That’s a level of access you won’t find at many larger financial institutions with headquarters outside the region.

Spotlighting Relationships, not Transactions

At CB&T, we understand the unique nuances of doing business in San Diego. With more than 25 offices throughout the area, we’re dedicated to building long-term relationships in the communities we serve.

As one of California’s leading banks, we offer sophisticated business-banking products, such as international finance, merchant services, cash management technology, and more. We are also a “Preferred SBA Lender” as designated by the U.S. Small Business Administration. Yet it’s building strong long-lasting business banking relationships that we focus on most. While many other institutions may review their performance based on transaction volume, we put the spotlight squarely on our client relationships.

Our clients enjoy the best of both worlds – strong financing solutions with first-class service, plus access to professional expertise and local decision makers. This can make all the difference when it comes time to arrange for the financing you need to expand your business.

When You’re Strong, We’re Strong

For more than 60 years, we’ve helped San Diego businesses through good times and bad. Over those years we’ve learned that our strength is driven by your success, which is why we are so committed to building strong business banking relationships one client at a time.

Meet the team.

Josh, Jim and Fred are seasoned banking professionals. Their team approach is simple — listen, collaborate, and advise. The result is a smart, personalized solution for every type of client need.

We’re banking on the businesses.

AmericanWest Bank
Five Tips:

Don’t ask for loans that should be funded with equity injections. Bankers aren’t paid to take equity risks; they get paid to make loans that will be repaid on time.

The amount of equity you need to operate your business will depend on several factors. One of the most important relates to your industry and what role your business plays in that industry. The amount of equity required for a manufacturer will be different from that required to run a wholesale distribution business. Retailers in the same industry will also have different equity requirements. The stability of the industry is also an important factor influencing the amount of equity needed. Firms in stable industries need less equity than firms operating in industries undergoing rapid change. The reason is that firms in stable industries can carry a higher level of debt due to the greater certainty of their revenue streams. Another factor that determines the amount of equity required for your business relates to your firm’s business model. Some firms offer easy credit terms to build market share and increase sales. Other firms operate on a cash-only basis. The sales terms your firm offers its customer base has an important impact on the amount of equity that your business will need to operate. If your product or service is in great demand, consider asking your customers for upfront deposits on pending orders or extending favorable pricing terms to customers who pay their invoices within 10 days of receipt. Another option is to ask suppliers for favorable terms of sale. Ask if they’ll let you pay invoices later with no interest or give you discounts for paying invoices early. Any additional customer or supplier financing reduces the amount of permanent working capital that needs to be funded with equity contributions from your firm’s shareholders.
Among the greatest challenges faced by small businesses is finding that their borrowing needs are often overlooked or considered too risky by large financial institutions. While stringent lending criteria is a key hurdle in today's lending climate, the biggest obstacle faced by small companies is that all too often banks and lenders simply don't understand their business and how to meet their needs. This is where the creativity and personal attention of a community bank that specializes in small business lending can make a crucial difference to a company's ability to access the capital it needs to be successful.

Take for example a San Diego contracting company that needs several hundred thousand dollars in financing for working capital. The company is growing, with more revenue projected, but has an immediate shortfall in funds to cover interim operating costs. This company approaches several large banks, who provide a list of lending criteria on both the deposit side (i.e., the minimum in account balances the company needs to have with that institution), and on the lending side (usually about 10 requirements).

Because the company's upcoming revenue growth is not reflected on its financials yet, and because it is a contracting company that is perceived to be high risk, the big banks turn down its request for financial assistance. This decision is made by underwriters who have never even spoken to the customer.

Now, consider the same company approaches a San Diego bank specializing in small business. That bank is staffed with professionals who understand small business. Those professionals meet with the customer, listen to understand his business and unique needs, and then work with the bank's team of lending professionals to find possible lending solutions. The bank – in this case Silvergate Bank – put its creativity and business knowledge to work, and ultimately provided the customer with two credit facilities totaling $403,000 using a state-sponsored special guaranty program.

Unfortunately, the specialty guaranty programs designed to help small businesses are an often overlooked area by large banks. Community banks, on the other hand, have a dedicated department or specialists who are familiar with all of these programs and are able to help find the best match for each borrower's particular needs.

Another challenging lending requirement that small businesses face with larger banks is collateral – typically large banks look for the loan to be secured by an owner-occupied real estate asset. Most small businesses, especially those that are newer, do not yet own their facilities and lease, instead. This immediately makes them ineligible for a loan.

Once again, that borrower has more options with a community bank that is willing to be creative. As an example, a local power company wrapping up its R&D phase approached Silvergate Bank for a $200,000 working capital line of credit. After understanding the company’s business and unique needs, Silvergate Bank was able to extend $200,000 in working capital, using special guaranty programs and outside investor real estate collateral.

In conclusion, where a small business banks is not only one of the most important decisions it will make, it is also one of the most important relationships it will form. When interviewing for a bank, be thorough. Expect a high level of service and know that the service you receive during this process is a good indication as to what you can expect afterward. Your new bank should help you transition your accounts so you can still focus on your business.

Finally, even if you don’t have a lending requirement now, anticipate that you will have one later. Ask your bank candidates what their lending process is like, what programs they offer, and how they believe they can meet your needs over time.
Do you remember that feeling before walking into class to take a big test? It was probably somewhere between a gut check and a sinking feeling accompanied by questions zipping through your mind: Did I study enough? Will I be able to recall the information? Why didn’t I take more notes in class? Maybe that last one was just me, but you get the idea.

At social functions I’ve had business owners tell me that asking for a loan or line of credit brings back that same anxiety. It used to perplex me and I would assure them that there must be some kind of simple misunderstanding with their banker. But over the years I’ve come to recognize it as an opportunity because he/she likely is not matched up with the right banker. I’ve picked up along the way is how vital it is for a business to be matched up with the right banker.

I am always surprised when people accept that uncomfortable feeling as inevitable. It’s not. At the end of the day I encourage you to remember your value as a customer. When you’re matched up with the right banker she/he will proactively recommend financial solutions to make the best use of your hard earned money and propel your business forward.

That’s why I’m at AmericanWest Bank. As a business-focused community bank, we’re fully committed to local businesses—large and small. The products and services you create, promote, sell and service, as well as the many people you employ, forms the foundation of our local economy.

Our team is comprised of highly-experienced local bankers who understand the importance of taking a hands-on approach with every customer. By this I mean our Relationship Managers work one-on-one with every customer and prospect. We get to know their businesses—from understanding their short and long-term goals to knowing how they bring their product to market. Only then do we tailor our lending, depository and treasury management products to suit their specific needs. This approach is a difference-maker in my mind because every business is unique and should be treated as such.

At the end of the day I encourage you to remember your value as a customer. When you’re matched up with the right banker she/he will proactively recommend financial solutions to make the best use of your hard earned money and propel your business forward.

By Jim Horton, Senior Vice President & Regional Manager, AmericanWest Bank

About AmericanWest Bank

AmericanWest Bank is a business-focused community bank. We are financially strong and well-positioned for the future. Visit us at any of our seven area locations:

- San Diego: University Town Center: 4445 Eastgate Mall, Suite 110, 858-629-8630
- Downtown: 701 B. Street, Suite 100, 619-251-6500
- Point Loma: 1350 Rosecrans Street, 619-243-7900
- Escondido: 353 West Grand Avenue, 760-520-0400
- Carlsbad: 5901 Priestly Drive, Suite 160, 760-448-8300
- Carmel Valley: 12770 High Bluff Dr., Suite 180, 858-529-1940
- Palm Desert: 44000 Cook Street, Suite 310, 760-346-4119
- Or anytime at www.awbank.net

You may also call Regional Manager Jim Horton directly at: (760) 448-8309.
Are banks lending? Yes, bank lending has rebounded for plain vanilla products and for borrowers with "cookie cutter" profiles. A borrower who falls outside those limited profiles and products likely will have substantial difficulty finding bank financing regardless of whether the borrower is otherwise well qualified. At BofI Federal Bank – although we serve the "cookie cutter" borrower well with a suite of standardized products – we focus on providing unique lending solutions based upon common-sense underwriting standards informed by deep industry and market knowledge for our target markets.

We have some of the lowest, if not the lowest, rates on conventional mortgages, yet we focus on consumer lending to single family high-end jumbo mortgage market, where the typical borrower's financial situation is complex and often fluid. Our commercial lending group focuses on permanent multifamily lending, lines of credit to a diversified group of real estate investors, lender finance, and a broad array of financial products targeted to serve health care finance companies.

Few high-end home buyers have "cookie cutter" financial situations. Regardless of high credit scores, lower loan to value and ample liquidity, the affluent self-employed borrower has a far more difficult time obtaining financing than borrowers who have a less complex financial situation. Factors that impact the availability of credit to high-end home buyers include volatility of income and property values, complex business tax returns, earnings volatility, and unique property features such as acreage. Our underwriters understand complex situations and are equipped with the ability to utilize product features like asset depletion and asset pledge programs that are tailored to the luxury home buyer.

Our commercial lending group doesn’t try to be all things to all people, but it provides unique value to our target market segments. By way of example, one type of borrower who is currently underserved in the marketplace is the non-traditional real estate investor that may be purchasing homes in bulk to rent, buying homes to refurbish and sell, making loans to other real estate investors, or buying mortgage notes in bulk. These borrowers are often looking for flexible lines of credit that can facilitate and expand their business. BofI Federal Bank has been a long-time leader servicing these investors nationwide.

One area where BofI has significantly strengthened its depth of experience and product suite is in health care finance. Health care is a highly fragmented industry with many lower and middle-market companies that play vital roles in the delivery of health care, but these companies are often challenged to meet capital needs for expansion and modernization. We are active in helping lower and middle-market health care companies expand and modernize through our suite of lending and factoring solutions specifically targeted to serve them.

In the multifamily lending space, we have seen increased demand for financing from private equity investors buying properties for short-term investments. We offer flexible terms and financing on mixed-use properties, mobile home parks and student housing. Investors seem particularly interested in our ability to look at all aspects of a property and the complete borrower profile to make a thoughtful underwriting decision.
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SMALL BUSINESS BANKING & FINANCE
May 6th

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August 19 – Large Vs. Community Banks - A series of questions will be asked to help educate our reader on the differences between a community bank vs. a large bank.
November 25 – 2014 Banking Forecast – An outlook into banking and the economy as we head into the new year.

SPACE DEADLINE: April 19

Contact Lauren Mannella
Senior Account Executive
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858.277.6595
lmannella@sdbj.com

“I didn’t know a credit union could do that!”

When it comes to handling a small business’ banking needs, you’d be surprised by what North Island Credit Union can, and will, do for you.

Commercial real estate loans from $500K to $15 million

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Business money market

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Getting Started

San Diego County Credit Union® (SDCCU®) is one of San Diego’s top home loan lenders. SDCCU recognizes that buying a home is one of the largest purchases that most people will ever make and it is important to understand as much as possible about the process before deciding to purchase a home. To help you feel confident about the home buying process, SDCCU offers free educational information with Home Buying Central at sdccu.com. This online tutorial walks you through the process of purchasing or refinancing a home from start to finish.

The first step to purchasing a home is deciding if it is financially feasible. Keep in mind that there will be upfront costs as well as the monthly mortgage and insurance payments. At sdccu.com there are a variety of financial calculators available to easily determine what you can afford and what your monthly payments may be.

Unique Loan Programs

SDCCU’s strength in the market allows them to lend on property types that other lenders may deny. SDCCU offers home loans that require as little as 3 percent down, saving buyers money. The reduced out of pocket costs make it possible for more consumers to get into a home. Fixed and adjustable loans offer zero point options and FREE 60-day rate locks. The unique No Closing Costs Adjustable Rate Mortgage (ARM) gives flexibility, stability and no closing costs on loans up to $1.5 million, valid on purchases and refinances. The initial low rate is fixed for the first five years and can only change once every five years, with a maximum cap of 5 percent over the life of the loan making it considerably more stable than other ARMs. Limit one offer per household with a maximum closing cost credit of $10,000.

Pre-Qualified vs. Pre-Approved

Getting pre-qualified is like getting an estimate on how much you can likely afford. Pre-qualification is based on information you give the lender about your income, assets and liabilities, and serves more as a guide rather than an official lender approval.

Getting pre-approved means that you fill out a loan application and provide your salary and credit information; the lender then checks your assets and pre-approves you to start shopping for a home within your budget. This is a very useful tool, especially in a highly competitive housing market. When you find your dream home, you can present the seller with your pre-approval document, showing them that not only are you serious about the purchase, but you’ve already been pre-approved for financing. It could make the difference in getting the house you want.

Expect the BEST

Credit unions like SDCCU are able to help consumers find the path to home ownership. “Home prices in San Diego are very high, leaving many buyers out of the market,” said San Diego County Credit Union president & CEO Teresa Halleck. She continued, “At SDCCU, we are committed to helping customers achieve long-term goals in addition to improving their present financial situation.”

SDCCU’s attention to customer service has earned numerous awards and accolades over the years. Most notably, the U-T San Diego Readers Poll honored SDCCU as BEST Credit Union for the thirteenth consecutive year, and BEST Financial Planner, BEST Home Loan Provider and BEST Place To Work for the third straight year.

SDCCU’s award for BEST Home Loan Provider is backed by the great rates and services they offer. SDCCU is one of Southern California’s most active lenders because they have created several attractive loan programs for homeowners. In addition to being a leading lender, SDCCU is historically one of the top five among all real estate lenders doing business locally.

Customer Benefits

SDCCU offers the free personalized services of dedicated real estate professionals with one goal in mind: to assist you with the home buying and selling process and get you into the home of your dreams! Special benefits include a dedicated advocate to guide you through the process, 40 percent cash reward on your agent’s real estate commission and one year of discounts on products and services offered in cooperation with SDCCU, including appliances, home security, moving and storage services and more!

We don’t get to know your business sitting behind a desk

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