

EMBRACING THE **BETTER** NORMAL

In Banking, in Business, and in Life

Even as the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic rocked the world, something remarkable has taken place in its wake. Banks, businesses, and people everywhere are learning new ways to work and developing a greater commitment to community and making life better for everyone.

Along with the heartache has come the opportunity to make positive changes in the way we do business and the way we live our lives. At JMARK, we call this the “Better Normal.” What is the Better Normal? This term, “Better Normal,” implies progress, change for the good, innovation, and positive disruption. How will we take the lessons learned from COVID-19, and apply them to make our organizations more successful, more resilient, and more robust? How will we carry the lessons we have learned about empathy, connection, and community into the future to be better versions of ourselves?

The “New Normal” vs. The “Better Normal”

You may hear people talking about “the new normal,” an idea that’s often laced with pessimism, a longing for the mythical “good old days,” and the resignation that the current situation just “is what it is” and can’t be improved. It’s a defeatist attitude that only multiplies the pain and keeps it going indefinitely.

Yet, in many ways, the world has become a kinder place. People are showing more gratitude than ever for doctors, nurses, EMTs, truckers, farmers, and even grocery store clerks. They’re making a point of visiting their elderly relatives while keeping them safe through social distancing. They’re showing compassion and pulling together to help each other out in thousands of little ways. If this is a new normal, it’s also a better one.

Your banking business has probably made some dramatic changes in the way you do busi-

ness, too—and you’ve done it all in a very short time. On the one hand, you learned how to work remotely, manage your teams, and operate your business in new ways. On the other, you may have discovered weaknesses in your systems and processes. And both kinds of knowledge can be beneficial if you make wise choices based on what you know now.

Your bank locations may already be open or will be reopening soon. Or, you may be taking a combined approach, with some people working in your brick-and-mortar bank while others work remotely. Even if everyone in your bank is still working from home, now is the time to think about what will happen next. No matter what your timeline is, you can begin now to improve your business operations and embrace the Better Normal in your bank and your life. Here are some ways to make it happen.

USE VIDEO CALLING TO CONNECT WITH CUSTOMERS

Nearly everyone has gotten used to using video calling in the last months. Some use

it for work, some for virtual doctor visits, and others to simply stay in touch with loved ones. So, now is the perfect time to make video calling available for your bank customers. As they talk with a teller about transactions or go over their business loan with their account manager, they develop a stronger bond with your organization. And they’re using a form of communication that has rapidly been adopted by society as a whole.

PLAN YOUR TECHNOLOGY BUDGET AND PURCHASES WITH THE FUTURE IN MIND

It’s time to change the way you invest in technology. Now, more than ever, banks are beginning to realize that they need to become more agile. They need to be ready to mobilize their remote workforce quickly in this crisis or any other. As you plan your I.T. budget, consider whether you need to add more laptops to replace desktop computers. Think about adding cloud services so your employees can access your systems whenever they need to, from wherever they are. Technology is vital to your success. So, it’s a good time to talk to your MSP about the devices and services you will need to achieve your upcoming goals.

ADOPT APPLICATIONS THAT FACILITATE COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

When everyone in your banking organization is using the right apps and software to communicate and collaborate, they're happier, more productive, and all on the same page. You can use software tools like:

- **Workplace from Facebook** – A secure working space where you can collaborate, communicate, and stay connected.
- **Microsoft Teams** – A cloud-based tool for communication and collaboration that allows your teams to make video calls, share files, and work together on shared documents
- **Microsoft Office 365** – The ubiquitous suites of productivity and collaboration tools, including Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, and more. Benefits include advanced security and scalability.
- **SmartSheet** – A cloud-based spreadsheet application that improves collaboration by standardizing and speeding up project management processes.
- **Trello** – Another cloud-based app your teams can use to manage project workflow.

These are obviously just a few of the many, many software services available to address nearly every modern business need. Moving into the Better Normal will require taking the time to evaluate your bank's needs and workflows and then seeking out the solutions that will enhance your work and empower your employees. Make sure and include your MSP as you consider adopting new solutions, since they will become a part of your technology environment, and you want to be sure your hardware and security can comfortably incorporate your new tools.

CREATE OR REVISE YOUR BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND DISASTER RECOVERY PLANS

COVID-19 has shown many banks the value of having a solid business continuity and disaster recovery plan. Even if you carefully created those plans in the past, the virus may have revealed some weaknesses or gaps in them. Whether the next crisis is another wave of the coronavirus in the coming months or a completely new challenge, you know more now about what you need to do to be ready for it when it comes. Work with your MSP to identify and overcome any weaknesses in your business continuity process to create a much better plan.

SEEK OUT TELECOMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS THAT SUPPORT REMOTE WORK

Communicating has been a considerable challenge for many banks as work rapidly

switched from offices and branch locations to employees' homes. Transferring calls hasn't always gone smoothly without everyone in the same building, using the same phone system. As a result, customer service suffered, business development stumbled, and employees had trouble communicating with each other.

But with a telecommunications system built to be flexible and scalable beyond your office, you can be prepared to go remote in an instant. Once you have a better system in place and your people trained to use it, both internal and external communication can remain reliable no matter where your employees are doing their work. Even better, the next time a crisis comes along, you will avoid costly disruptions in communications.

BECOME A MORE EMPATHETIC LEADER

The Better Normal is about banking and business, but on the human level; it's a new way of

treating others. It's about leaders and coworkers showing more empathy and compassion to each other. It's about connecting with your team in friendly and helpful ways. It's about showing compassion to your customers. Through this crisis and after it ends, you can create the Better Normal by caring for and communicating with each other to build a better experience for everyone.

We invite you to join us in reaching for the Better Normal in the days and months ahead. At JMARK, we have the technology solutions you need to thrive in today's banking environment and meet any challenges that come along. To learn more, give me a call at 844-44-JMARK or send me an email at todd@jmark.com. I look forward to connecting with you to discuss all your technology questions and ideas about embracing the Better Normal.



TODD NIELSEN BIO

Todd Nielsen is JMARK's chief strategy officer and oversees all marketing activities at JMARK. Todd is a veteran in the I.T. industry, having served as CEO, COO, VP, and president of I.T. services companies across the Midwest. This deep experience makes him a strong advisor in technology strategy. In his role as CSO at JMARK, he works at developing forward-looking strategies that will increase JMARK's success. His work is complete only when those strategies have become a reality. Todd lives on a small farm with his wife and two kids.

THREE DECADES OF INNOVATIVE I.T. SOLUTIONS

For three decades, JMARK has been providing innovative I.T. solutions to organizations of all sizes. With all that experience comes expansive expertise. We understand the challenges that modern businesses face and know how to maintain continuity in the midst of the continual changes that occur in technology needs and expectations—and we work diligently to bring that expertise to our clients.

Most importantly, at JMARK we put people before technology. Everything we do, every service we offer, is a reflection of our

People First, Technology Second philosophy. Because while we love technology, we also understand that I.T. is only useful inasmuch as it serves to empower people and enhance the work they do; work that, in turn, should facilitate growth, spur innovation, increase opportunity, and open up new paths to success.

Contact JMARK today and let us show you what our I.T. services can do for your firm.