

MEET CONSUMERS
WHERE THEY

CLICK



The next five years represent critical financial milestones for each generation.

How will you **earn their business**?

Immediacy, personalization, and convenience. These three words describe today's banking temperament, and as a result, the expectations of the consumers you are trying to attain. Meeting these expectations isn't optional either. It's the key to driving engagement, loyalty, and growth. Across the industry, **both banks and credit unions are taking notice**. [Research](#) reveals that 94% of financial institutions plan to integrate new technologies into their digital banking experience, and over half of those—52%—are prioritizing digital account opening. That's encouraging. But technology is only one part of the equation. To connect meaningfully, your institution must understand how these consumers discover, evaluate, and choose financial relationships.



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52% are prioritizing digital account opening

Where and How Are Consumers Banking?

Every consumer has a unique financial story, and each generation is at a different chapter. [Baby Boomers](#) are entering retirement, prioritizing stable income and savings products. Gen X leads in overall spending and is focused on wealth-building and long-term financial planning. Meanwhile, our data shows that **millennials remain a core segment**, stabilizing in new account activity, highly engaged with digital experiences and **Gen Z is continuing to open new accounts year over year**, with checking and savings products leading the way.

But where those [accounts](#) are opened is telling: **digital-only challengers captured 44% of new checking accounts in 2024**, up from 36% in 2020, after peaking at 47% in 2023. In Q3 2025 alone, [Chime](#) accounted for 13% of all new checking accounts.

That growth isn't by chance. These competitors have earned consumer loyalty by designing for **simplicity, speed, and transparency**—the values that define the digital-native mindset. They've reimagined banking not as a product, but as an experience—one that fits seamlessly into consumers' lives rather than asking them to adapt.

For your financial institution, the lesson is clear: success no longer hinges on size or legacy, it depends on experience. The opportunity lies in **building digital engagement strategies** that mirror the flexibility, personalization, and convenience consumers already expect elsewhere in their digital lives.

Closing the Digital Gap

Bridging the gap between consumer expectations and institutional capabilities isn't just about having the right technology. It's about powering that technology with strategy, alignment, and intent—so every tool, workflow, and data point works together to deliver seamless, personalized, and meaningful experiences.

In this white paper, we'll explore how your institution can accelerate digital acquisition and drive omnichannel engagement by optimizing every stage of the consumer journey—from the first click to a lasting relationship.

SPECIFICALLY, WE'LL COVER:

- How to **capture attention and drive discovery** across all generations.
- Why **seamless, flexible onboarding** is essential for converting interest into action.
- How to deliver a **consistent omnichannel presence** that builds trust and loyalty.
- The **role of data and analytics** in anticipating needs and personalizing outreach.
- Why a **connected tech stack**—anchored by a unified LOS and account opening platform—is essential for agility, compliance, and innovation.



By the end, you'll have a practical, actionable guide that empowers your institution to meet consumers where they are today and where they're headed next.

Understanding Generational Behaviors

Consumers across generations [interact with financial institutions](#) in unique ways, making a strong omnichannel strategy essential. Baby Boomers tend to favor personal guidance and in-branch support, while Gen X often prefers functional, intuitive websites to conduct their financial business.

Millennials and Gen Z, however, are reshaping the rules of engagement. For these digital-native consumers, convenience is a baseline expectation. **Their financial journeys often start where they**

spend most of their time online—social media, review sites, or mobile apps—and they expect speed, clarity, personalization, and experiences that reflect their values.

From both a [lending and deposit account](#) perspective, **millennials and Gen Z represent your largest growth opportunity**. But to reach them effectively and hold their attention (and business), you need to understand how they discover financial products, evaluate options, and decide where to do business.

Digital-First Lifestyles

Both millennials and Gen Z operate in a mostly, if not fully digital ecosystem. **Their phones are their wallets, their financial advisors, and their gateways to every transaction**. They expect speed, clarity, and control at every interaction and when friction appears, they leave.

To capture these audiences, your institution must be **discoverable online**. That means optimizing search visibility, ensuring responsive web design, and maintaining a unified digital presence across every platform. The first impression often happens long before the first login.

Ask yourself: if a potential account holder searches your institution's name on Google or sees an ad on Instagram, what do they experience in those first five seconds? Is your message clear, credible, and consistent with the experience they'll find when they click "**APPLY NOW**"?



Values-Driven Decision Making

Both generations are also value-driven. They prioritize transparency, ethical practices, and community impact. They want to **bank with brands that reflect their beliefs** on sustainability, social responsibility, and fairness.

Your brand story matters here. Consumers don't just want to know **what** you offer; **they want to know why it matters**. Aligning your message with shared values fosters deeper trust and emotional connection, which can turn a first deposit into a lifelong relationship.



Discovery Channels

Social Media, Influencers, & Micro-Communities

Social media has become the new word-of-mouth, especially among millennials and Gen Z. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are filled with “finfluencers” who break down financial topics—budgeting, credit, saving, and investing—into content that feels approachable and real.

Forward-thinking financial institutions are leveraging these networks not by chasing social media stars with millions of followers, but by building relationships with [trusted local voices](#).

Community-based creators, local educators, and niche online groups can authentically connect your brand to the audiences you serve every day.

Through sponsored collaborations, co-branded educational content, or engagement within

micro-communities, your institution can amplify awareness, build credibility, and spark meaningful digital engagement—all without competing for attention in overcrowded national spaces.

SEO, Paid Media, & Organic Content

Organic discovery remains critical. Search-optimized blogs, educational landing pages, and localized content ensure your institution appears at the moment of intent—when consumers are actively seeking financial solutions.

Paired with targeted paid media and retargeting campaigns, SEO and content marketing **convert intent into measurable acquisition**, driving users into streamlined, mobile-first account or loan application flows.

Capturing Attention

Seamless User Experience

A consumer's first digital interaction with your institution sets the tone for the entire relationship. A clear, intuitive website and mobile app experience are non-negotiable. Cluttered interfaces, unclear navigation, or lengthy application forms can cause immediate drop-off.

Instead, focus on **removing friction at every step**—simple layouts, logical form progression, visible security cues, and mobile-first design. Think of every click as a test of trust. If the experience feels effortless, the user feels confident.

Thumb-Stopping Creative

Consumers scroll through so much content in a day, to capture attention yours must **stop the thumb and hold the mind**, while feeling native to your message. Short-form video, bold visuals, and motion-driven storytelling effectively demonstrate benefits like instant card issuance, same-day account opening, or personalized pre-approvals.

But don't just use attention to sell—**use it to educate**. Pair product promotion with actionable financial tips or insights. Content that helps consumers make smarter financial decisions **engages longer, builds trust, and positions your institution as a credible, reliable resource**, rather than just another advertiser.



By streamlining its online application experience, this financial institution achieved a **168%** YoY increase in applications and a **135%** lift in funded accounts.

[VIEW CASE STUDY](#)

Authentic Storytelling

Millennials and Gen Z value authenticity. Highlight real customer stories, local partnerships, and tangible impact—not just rates or features.

Purpose-driven storytelling can strengthen brand connection and fosters loyalty.



Interactive & Personalized Formats

Tools like financial quizzes, loan and savings calculators, and prequalification journeys **invite deeper engagement while capturing valuable data**.

This allows your institution to refine messaging, segment audiences, and deliver tailored offers that drive acquisition and retention.

 Once you've captured attention, the real test begins. How you welcome new customers—and how easily they can complete that first interaction—determines whether curiosity becomes conversion...

Onboarding Experience: Seamless, Flexible, & Built for Conversion

One of the first interactions a consumer has with your financial institution is when they begin your digital application process. That moment—the decision to open an account or apply for a loan can define whether your institution becomes part of their financial story or just another tab they close.



The First Touch

When a prospective customer begins an application, they're signaling intent and that intent is fragile. Long, complex, or confusing onboarding flows are consistently among the top reasons for application abandonment.

Consumers expect banking to mirror the convenience of their favorite digital experiences. **If signing up for streaming or shopping online takes seconds, why should opening a checking account take thirty minutes?**

A smooth, intuitive onboarding experience delivers two powerful messages:

1. *You respect their time.*
2. *You have your technology—and by extension, your operations—under control.*

That initial trust is priceless, setting the tone for future interactions.

Frictionless Verification

Reducing friction starts with clarity. Every additional click, question, or page load introduces risk of abandonment. Institutions that streamline application flows—by **removing unnecessary fields, offering progress indicators, and enabling auto-fill**—see significant increases in completion rates.

Modern account opening and lending solutions powered by automation and real-time verification can help you shorten applications while maintaining compliance and security. Features like:

- AI-powered ID verification to authenticate customers quickly and safely.
- Device risk assessment to flag suspicious activity without manual intervention.
- Behavioral analytics to detect unusual patterns and minimize fraud.

These technologies don't just improve conversion, they enhance security, compliance, and consumer confidence simultaneously.

Flexibility Across Devices & Moments

Today's consumers live across devices. They might start an application on their mobile phone, continue on a laptop during lunch, and finish on a tablet that evening. **If your onboarding process doesn't adapt across channels, you're introducing unnecessary friction.**

Flexible onboarding means allowing users to pause and resume applications seamlessly, with data saved securely across platforms. It also means designing with accessibility and personalization in mind. That inclusivity is a key part of the user experience.

By offering dynamic, device-agnostic processes, your institution meets consumers wherever they are—literally and figuratively.



See how this financial institution reduced abandonment and achieved a **17%** boost in deposit account applications with a flexible, personalized experience.

[VIEW CASE STUDY](#)

Personalization & Dynamic Adaptation

Using behavioral data and analytics, you can tailor onboarding journeys to each user's profile and intent.

For example:

- Returning consumers might skip redundant verification steps.
- Loan applicants could see personalized product recommendations based on credit profile.
- New users may appreciate contextual education or quick-start tips right within the onboarding flow.

This kind of personalization transforms onboarding from a **transaction into an experience.**

Continuous Optimization

Onboarding isn't a "set it and forget it" process. Consumer expectations, regulatory standards, and technology evolve constantly. The institutions that lead are those that regularly audit and refine their digital workflows—removing friction, testing conversion points, and simplifying where possible.

Building in feedback loops—whether through analytics, completion metrics, or post-application surveys—allows you to **continuously adapt** and keep the experience aligned with user needs.

Process optimization enabled this financial institution to reduce application-to-approval times by **64%** YoY.

[VIEW CASE STUDY](#)

Turning Information Into Insight

Data is the connective tissue between your technology, your teams, and your consumers. **It reveals not only *what* consumers are doing, but *why* they're doing it and what they're likely to do next.**

When applied strategically, analytics can uncover key behavioral patterns:

- Which acquisition channels generate the highest-value accounts.
- Which products resonate most strongly by demographic or geography.
- Where consumers drop off in onboarding flows and why.
- How economic conditions influence deposit and loan activity.

These insights empower your teams to move from reactive problem-solving to proactive engagement, anticipating needs before they arise.

Breaking Down Silos: From Fragmented Data to Unified Intelligence

Yet, for many institutions, this level of insight remains out of reach. 51% percent of financial professionals cite system integration as their single biggest analytics challenge, and with good reason.

When data lives in separate systems—core banking, CRM, LOS, marketing automation, and risk platforms—teams spend valuable hours reconciling spreadsheets instead of analyzing outcomes. By the time insights are compiled, opportunities have often passed.

McKinsey estimates that data silos drain over \$3.1 trillion annually in lost revenue and productivity across industries. **For financial institutions, those costs manifest as missed cross-sell opportunities, delayed lending decisions, and fragmented consumer experiences.**

Breaking these silos requires a unified data strategy—one that consolidates information from every consumer touchpoint into a central, accessible ecosystem. **When your systems can communicate, your teams can collaborate, and your institution can move at the speed of the market.**



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\$3.1 TRILLION

Data silos drain over \$3.1 trillion annually

Behavioral Segmentation & Predictive Analytics

With unified data comes clarity and with clarity comes foresight.

Behavioral segmentation allows institutions to group consumers by habits, not just demographics. Predictive analytics takes it a step further, using **AI and machine learning to forecast what consumers will need next.**

For example:

- Identifying when a customer may be in the market for an auto refinance based on browsing and payment data.
- Detecting early signs of deposit attrition or credit card dormancy.
- Forecasting loan delinquency risk using transaction trends and external data.

Predictive insights turn your marketing, lending, and service operations from responsive to anticipatory—strengthening loyalty while improving operational efficiency.

Feedback Loops

Analytics are most powerful when they inform continuous improvement. By establishing feedback loops—**using data to test, learn, and refine processes**—your institution can evolve alongside consumer expectations.

Examples include:

- Tracking digital application completion rates to identify friction points.
- Measuring engagement by channel to reallocate marketing budgets in real time.
- Using customer satisfaction data to fine-tune onboarding or service workflows.

This cycle of ongoing optimization helps ensure every touchpoint—from acquisition to retention—performs at its highest potential.



Personalized Outreach: From Insight to Intelligent Engagement

Personalization is not just a marketing strategy; it's a value exchange.

Consumers share their data; in return, they expect meaningful, contextual experiences that make their financial lives easier. Institutions that deliver on that promise build both emotional connection and competitive advantage.

Predictive insights, behavioral analytics, and customer-specific data have redefined how you can accomplish this. Rather than reacting to consumer behavior, you can now anticipate it—building engagement strategies that evolve alongside consumers for long-term relevance and loyalty.

Dynamic Outreach & Tailored Messaging

Rather than broad, one-size-fits-all campaigns, data-powered marketing technology can enable your institution to deliver tailored experiences across every channel. By **integrating account, transaction, and behavioral data**, you can dynamically adjust offers, messaging, and tone to align with each customer's unique profile.

This might look like:

- Highlighting localized CD rates in markets where competition is highest.
- Featuring personalized auto loan offers for consumers browsing vehicle-related content on your website.
- Sending savings promotions to customers whose spending data shows they've recently reduced discretionary purchases.

Each of these interactions reinforces that your institution *knows* and *values* the consumer, **turning every touchpoint into a conversation** rather than a one-way broadcast.



Lifecycle Marketing & Behavioral Triggers

Personalization is most powerful when it's *timed right*. By combining transaction data, behavioral cues, and predictive analytics, your institution can **identify moments of opportunity**—when consumers are most likely to engage, convert, or expand their relationship.

These triggers can be based on real-time actions or milestones, such as:

- **Loan Maturity:** A customer's auto loan is nearing term, and browsing data suggests they're shopping for a new vehicle, triggering a pre-qualified refinance or new loan offer before they look elsewhere.
- **Deposit Growth:** A checking account maintains a consistently high balance, prompting a personalized introduction to a high-yield savings account or short-term CD.
- **Reactivation:** Dormant credit card users receive a targeted incentive to reignite card usage.
- **Home Equity:** Mortgage data identifies homeowners with significant equity and recent home improvement purchases, prompting a HELOC offer positioned as a flexible, smart solution.
- **Digital Adoption:** Customers not yet using your mobile app receive personalized nudges—like pre-filled application links or exclusive online rate discounts—to boost digital engagement.

Each example reflects the same principle: **don't wait for opportunity—create it**. When outreach aligns with life context and behavioral intent, it stops feeling like marketing and starts functioning as service. That shift builds trust, deepens relationships, and positions your institution as a true financial partner.

Data-driven segmentation helped this financial institution increase loan funding by **50%** in just four weeks, while improving the funded-to-application ratio by **10%** year over year

[VIEW CASE STUDY](#)



AI-Driven Personalization Engines

AI has transformed how this level of personalization scales. By analyzing thousands of data points, AI-driven personalization engines can **predict what content, timing, and channel will yield the highest impact** for each individual.

This level of intelligence allows your institution to:

- Recommend the next best product automatically.
- Adjust outreach frequency based on user engagement.
- Serve hyper-relevant offers that feel tailored rather than transactional.

The result is marketing that feels less like algorithm and more like intuition.

Recovering Abandoned Applications

Every incomplete application represents both lost opportunity and valuable insight. By leveraging automation, your institution can **re-engage these potential accountholders** through personalized reminders, incentives, or support prompts.

For example:

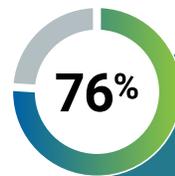
- Sending a follow-up email with a one-click link to resume an application.
- Offering a live chat or call with a representative to assist with any final steps.
- Delivering a limited-time incentive, such as an interest rate reduction or bonus offer, to encourage completion.

These small, timely interventions can significantly boost conversion rates while demonstrating responsiveness.

LOS & Tech Stacking: Building an Integrated, Intelligent, & Secure Ecosystem

Financial institutions are investing in digital tools, analytics platforms, and consumer experience. In fact, 76% of FIs [plan to increase technology spend](#) over the next year. **But if your systems can't talk to each other, the value of that investment is capped.**

When your loan origination system (LOS), account opening platform, marketing technology, and core banking system operate in silos, you can't see the full customer picture. Each system may function well on its own, but **without seamless integration, your institution loses time, accuracy, and agility.**



76% of FIs plan to increase tech spend...

But if your systems can't talk to each other, the value of that investment is capped.

The Cost of Disconnected Systems

More than half of financial institution leaders [cite data silos as a major barrier](#) to innovation and growth. Fragmented systems create inefficiencies that ripple across every department:

- **Conflicting “truths”** across lending, marketing, and compliance teams make strategic alignment difficult.
- **Manual workarounds** slow down decision cycles and strain IT resources.
- **Compliance risks** grow when data visibility and audit trails are incomplete.
- **Consumer trust** erodes when service feels inconsistent across channels.

This can lead to slower decisions, reduced competitiveness, and missed opportunities—all at a time when digital-first challengers are moving faster than ever.



With a single origination system across channels this financial institution has reduced internal complexity and **now processes 30,000+ deposit applications per month** while maintaining a unified view of customer accounts across personal and business banking.

[VIEW CASE STUDY](#)

Integration & Interoperability: The Foundation of Agility

You should think of your technology not as a collection of tools, but as a *connected ecosystem*. A unified tech stack enables your teams to **access, analyze, and act on data in real time**—whether they’re underwriting a loan, launching a campaign, or reviewing performance metrics. By selecting cloud-based systems that integrate seamlessly with your core, your institution can unlock:

- **Speed-to-decision:** Faster loan processing, account approvals, and credit decisions with fewer manual touchpoints.
- **Operational transparency:** Real-time dashboards and performance reporting that empower every department to act on the same data.
- **Scalability and flexibility:** Easier addition of fintech partners, fraud mitigation tools, and analytics solutions as your needs evolve.
- **Consistent consumer experience:** Unified data and workflows mean the same smooth experience whether a customer applies online, in-app, or in-branch.



Integrating loan origination, deposit account opening, and data analytics on a single digital platform enabled this financial institution to auto-decision **51%** of all loans.

[VIEW CASE STUDY](#)

Fraud Protection: Managing Risk From the Start

As your institution becomes more digital, risk inevitably grows alongside it. Fraudsters are increasingly targeting the same channels institutions are working hardest to optimize for growth. According to TransUnion's [State of Omnichannel Fraud Report](#), **13.5% of all newly created accounts**—roughly one in seven—were suspected to be fraudulent.

This makes digital account opening both your institution's greatest opportunity and its most targeted vulnerability. The demand for frictionless onboarding experiences has created an environment where fraudsters can exploit speed and automation to their advantage.

But you can build a multi-layer defense, without sacrificing the consumer experience we've been talking about.



1 in 7 newly created accounts were suspected to be fraudulent

Multi-Layered Protection Without Friction

By combining **AI-powered identity verification, device risk assessments, and behavioral analytics**, your institution can detect anomalies long before they become costly incidents, without slowing legitimate applicants.

For example, when an applicant's data doesn't align—such as mismatched personal details, unusual device activity, or suspicious behavioral patterns—AI-driven systems can automatically flag and escalate the case for review, rather than stalling the entire onboarding process. This **enables faster, smarter decisioning while keeping legitimate consumers moving through the process without unnecessary friction.**

The key to achieving the secure-seamless experience balance is **embedding these fraud mitigation tools directly within your digital account opening and LOS workflows**—so detection happens quietly, efficiently, and in real time.

Integrating advanced fraud detection within the account opening workflow allowed this financial institution to start detecting fraudulent application within one hour.

[VIEW CASE STUDY](#)

Top 3 Lessons Learned For Engaging Today's Consumers

While millennials and Gen Z have led the charge toward digital-first banking, the expectation for convenience and clarity spans every generation. Across the strategies explored in this white paper, three key lessons emerge for financial institutions seeking to meet these expectations:

1 Meet consumers where they are—digitally and personally.

Engagement starts with understanding how generations discover, research, and interact with financial products. Social media, influencers, micro-communities, and digital content are now essential discovery channels. Institutions that combine these insights with personalized, data-driven outreach can anticipate needs, deliver relevant offers, and foster loyalty at every stage of the consumer lifecycle.

2 Seamless, frictionless experiences are table stakes.

From account opening to lending, speed, flexibility, and convenience are baseline expectations. Omnichannel experiences, smooth onboarding, and real-time processing are no longer differentiators—they're requirements for reaching consumers across all generations. Friction in any step of the journey increases drop-off, reduces engagement, and hands opportunity to digital-first competitors.

3 Integration drives trust, security, and growth

Digital engagement and personalization rely on connected, intelligent systems. Integrating LOS, account opening, fraud protection, marketing automation, and analytics enables faster decisions, consistent experiences, and proactive risk management. When these systems communicate seamlessly, your institution can deliver both speed and security—protecting assets, maintaining compliance, and building confidence among each generation of consumers.

By leveraging MeridianLink's tools and programmable logic, we have been able to analyze challenges, innovate and create efficiencies, improve communications, and optimize timing. This partnership has enabled us to decision loans in under two hours, leading to quicker decisions and loan closings, which has greatly enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)

MeridianLink One: The Solution for Modern Consumer Engagement

The strategies above are only as effective as the technology supporting them. MeridianLink® One provides a unified, integrated platform connecting digital lending, account opening, marketing automation, and analytics in real time.

WITH MERIDIANLINK ONE, YOUR INSTITUTION CAN:

✓ Accelerate applications with touchless workflows

Let consumers complete applications quickly and on their own time with autofill, document upload, eSignature, and save-and-resume options.

✓ Grow lending and deposits faster

Increase conversions and unlock more cross-sell opportunities with pre-approvals and faster decisions that speed up funding.

✓ Reach and support applicants anywhere

Deliver a consistent experience across channels that attracts new consumers and supports them throughout their application journey.

✓ Create and control branded experiences

Easily configure and brand applications to match your institution's strategy, style, and audience.

✓ Recover more abandoned applications

Recover more opportunities with reporting that flags incomplete applications so you can re-engage applicants and adjust processes to improve completion rates.

✓ Connect to leading fraud and identity verification solutions

Enhance security and compliance by integrating with top-tier fraud protection and identity verification providers through MeridianLink's marketplace of ready-to-use integrations.

CONTACT US TODAY

Learn how MeridianLink One can help your institution deliver seamless, personalized, and secure experiences for every generation of consumers.