

BankFIRST

Providing a full range of commercial services for individuals and businesses

BankFIRST was established in Seminole County in 2003, opening a full service branch located at 3791 W. State Road 46 in Sanford. The bank was established with the help of several local businessmen who believed that Sanford was in need of a community bank that stressed serving businesses and local entrepreneurs. BankFIRST has been able to meet this need as its focus has been and will always be on locally owned businesses. The bank provides a full range of commercial services to include traditional commercial lending, Small Business Administration loans, and commercial factoring. The bank has the resources to serve businesses at all stages of the growth cycle from fast growing start ups to mature businesses in a transitional ownership or exit strategy phase. BankFIRST has also been a leader in remote deposit capture technology as it was among the first community banks in Central Florida to offer this service which eliminates trips to the bank to make deposits.

BankFIRST was founded in 1989 and will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2009. We believe that a banker should form the third pillar of support for private businesses; the others being a corporate attorney and accountant. In choosing a banker, a business person or entrepreneur should look for someone who not only strives to understand their business but also to understand the industry and economic environment in which the business operates. Banking is becoming very commoditized and a banker should add value beyond what is provided by depository and lending services.

In addition to industry knowledge and specific business knowledge, today's successful community banker must have a commitment to his or her community. They must also be available to their customers and prospects. A proactive community banker will anticipate customer needs and



David Felker, Executive Vice-President

will be available well beyond the traditional nine to five hours to consult with customers and meet those needs. They also should be able to point to a successful track record of several years serving their local markets.

Community banks in Seminole County, like BankFIRST, have avoided the credit crisis because of their focus on traditional and safe banking policies. David A. Felker, Executive Vice President, said "Most community banks in Seminole County were not caught holding the sub prime mortgage backed securities or sub prime residential mortgages portfolios that are at the center of the mortgage and credit crisis. The challenge facing community banks in this environment is more of a crisis of confidence as many customers became suspicious of all banks based on

what was happening on Wall Street. The increased FDIC deposit coverage has helped alleviate some concern. However, nothing takes the place of being as informed and as aware as possible in an attempt to understand what is going on in what has proven to be a very confusing and challenging environment.

Community banks have a competitive advantage because the customer is more likely to be dealing with a banker that has been in their market for a number of years and has ties to the community and the businesses that serve the community," Felker said.

"A banking relationship should be about the customer and not about the bank. Business owners and entrepreneurs want stability in their banking relationship and they want a banker that will act in their best interest, especially in the current uncertain economic environment. 2009 will most likely be a very challenging year for small businesses. During the past year, many community bank customers just wanted the reassurance of picking up the phone and speaking directly to their banker about what was going on.

"The savings and loan crisis of 1988-1991 and the recession that accompanied it resulted in far more bank failures than have taken place so far this year.

"Much has been said recently about how banks are not lending money. The truth is that well performing banks and well capitalized banks are willing and able to lend money. However, businesses need to take the necessary steps to clean up their balance sheet and insure that their business is properly financed. There is money to lend but only to the most qualified borrowers."

If you are a small business in Seminole County and are looking to improve upon your banking relationship; please contact David Felker, Executive Vice President, at 407-513-9855 or 407-448-4465 or through email at dfelker@bankfirst.com.

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"A banking relationship should be about the customer and not about the bank."



— BankFIRST of Sanford —
Best of Seminole!

David Felker

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Enjoy the difference.

