



Tom Duryea, CEO, Summit State Bank: Making the most of a very special place

Monday, October 17, 2011
By Business Journal Staff Report

Tell us a little bit about Summit State Bank.

We are a local community bank here to serve Sonoma County with the highest standards of service and innovative banking technology. Summit State Bank is committed to finding ways to support our community and our economy. We support our customers by buying their products and using their services whenever possible. We believe that by banking locally, you are making a difference in our community's economy by helping fund local loans, provide local jobs and even supporting local nonprofits that provide life-changing services in our community.

Summit State Bank was the first Sonoma County community bank to launch Mobile Deposit, and has since launched Mobile Banking. Summit also recently launched their \$50 million Sonoma County Small Business Lending Program to support small businesses and nonprofits with the resources needed to strengthen and grow.

From talking with your business customers, where do you see potential areas of economic vitality for Sonoma County?

Increasingly, I see more and more economic vitality from those businesses that are more lifestyle oriented. Sonoma County is becoming increasingly driven and transformed by individuals seeking a piece or being part of our unique lifestyle.

Sonoma County has so much to offer, with our premium wineries, local produce and quality food, good climate and even our appealing cycling culture that is among the best of the world. Tourists are coming in increasing numbers to spend time in Sonoma County. We are attracting many who are moving here full-time to experience the bounty that makes up Sonoma County.

We are finding that those businesses that are involved in these lifestyle-related activities are actually thriving in this current environment. The best example of this is in Healdsburg. In the past thirty days alone, more than 10 new businesses have opened, including mostly lifestyle-related businesses like restaurants and wine bars. Sonoma County is becoming not only a destination for travel, but also a permanent destination for living as we offer such a rich and rewarding lifestyle.

One of the issues facing our local, state and national economy is the pace of lending for business expansion. Small businesses have been hesitant to take on debt and regulators have raised the level of scrutiny. How can we break out of this vice?

Breaking out of this vice requires a change in perspective and expectations. To avoid another or further fallout in our economy, we must evaluate why this crisis was initially created – mostly due to an over-extension of credit. More conservative lending practices are crucial to our economy’s healing and long-term viability. This may not help with the short-term vice, but is the answer for moving forward in a healthy and vibrant economy.

At Summit, we have only seen a slight drop in our lending during the “slow” period of 2008-2010 versus the “go-go” days of 2005-2007. It is important to keep in mind that businesses need to stay up on current trends and their customers’ needs, and correspondingly tailor their services to capture these evolving market changes.

What do you see as Sonoma County’s economic competitive advantage?

We are incredibly fortunate to live and work in one of the most beautiful places in the world. We have coast with Bodega Bay, Petaluma, the Russian River, Dry Creek Valley, Alexander Valley, and the Sonoma Valley. We have an airport that flies to L.A., Portland, Seattle, Las Vegas, and soon Denver, a major hub to drive business into Sonoma County. San Francisco and Tahoe are extremely accessible as well. We have a fairly diverse economic base with an increasing higher-educated force. Our housing affordability is now at the median for the entire United States.

This translates into an incredible competitive advantage for Sonoma County that will further drive economic activity and vitality.

Is there something you would like to add?

Sonoma County is persevering better than most through this economy, and it is because of the drive to experience the exceptional quality of life Sonoma County has to offer. There are many positive indicators about our County’s resilience, and as businesses remain positive and determined, our community is coming together to support our local economy.