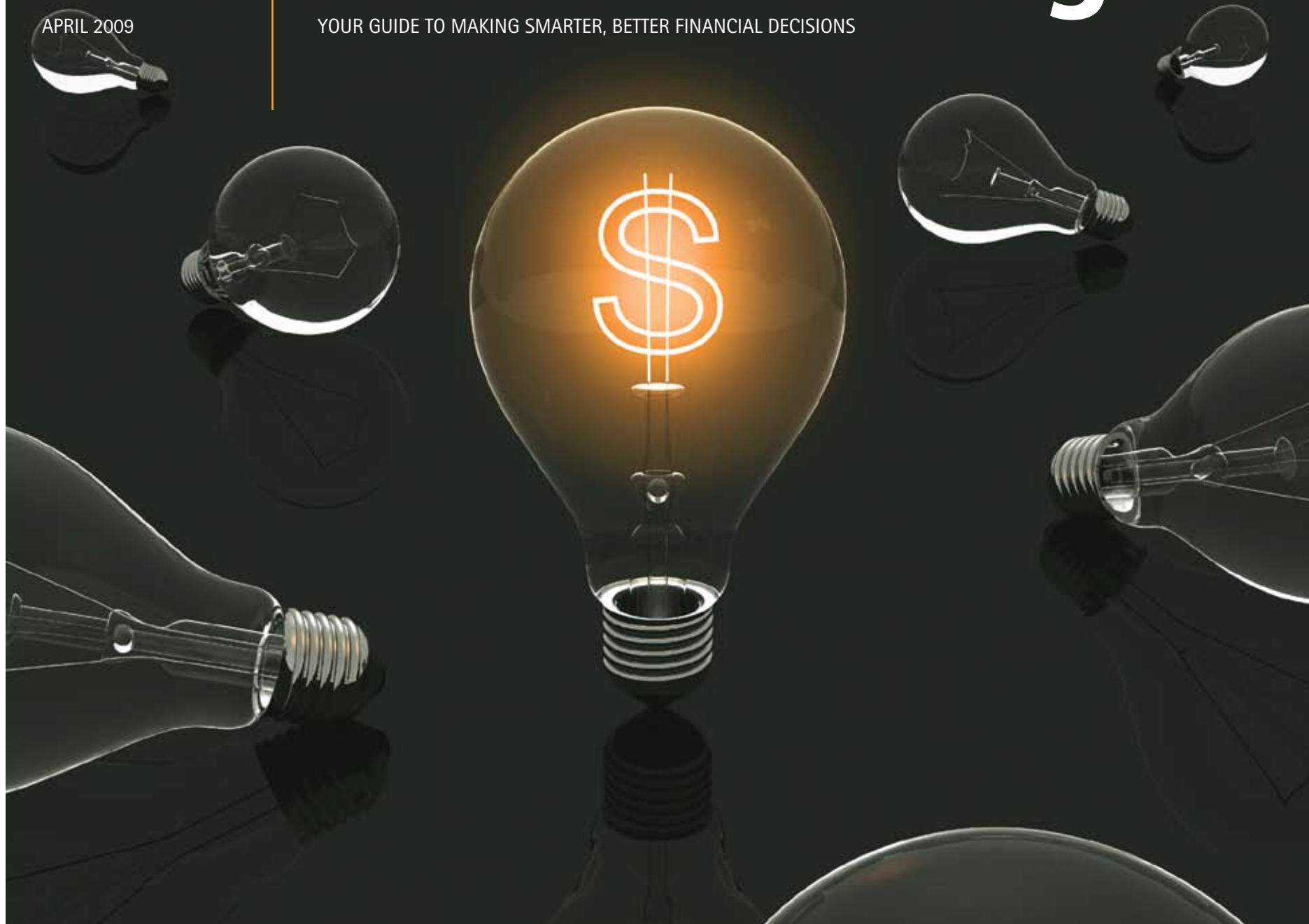


**MEDIA  
PLANET**

APRIL 2009

# *Smart* Banking

YOUR GUIDE TO MAKING SMARTER, BETTER FINANCIAL DECISIONS



**LIVE SOLID BANK SOLID**



SunTrust Bank, Member FDIC.

## SMART BANKING



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## MEDIA PLANET

## SMART BANKING

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# Plenty of Options for Banking Smart



In times like these, financial decisions have both immediate and hard-hitting ramifications – from setting and keeping a household budget to protecting assets to building a credit history. Not to mention simply stretching every dollar. Managing money becomes more important than ever.

Fortunately for consumers, companies offering banking and related services are strengthening traditional products and developing new ones. Even if you feel poorer (and who doesn't these days?), you still have access to more financial tools, technology and information than ever before to help with that dollar stretch.

Take savings. Sure, it's hard to think about putting money away for a rainy day when we're in the midst of a financial flood, but any personal finance expert will tell you that starting to save early in life is one very big key to meeting financial goals later on. Many banks offer savings accounts that automatically transfer in funds from your checking account. You set the amount – \$10, \$100, \$500 – that gets moved every month.

It's almost as if the money was never there to spend, so how can you miss it? And bank deposits up to \$250,000 are insured by the FDIC, so there's no safer way to save.

More and more online tools help with everything from setting budgets and tracking expenses to calculating taxes and paying bills. Many are free and can aggregate data from multiple accounts. It's easier than ever to collect and manage financial information in one place.

You can transact business online reassured that cyber-security experts are continuously beefing up Internet safety. New technologies make it hard for bad guys trying to steal information off the information superhighway and easy for you to have confidence in the security of the Web site you're visiting. A little common sense on all our parts undercuts the effectiveness of most other cyber-scams. Online finance is as safe as a trip to your local bank branch.

While banks continue to anchor the financial system, consumers can also choose from a growing array of options for conducting financial affairs. Pay bills, transfer funds, even

shop online using alternatives to checking accounts and bank-issued credit and debit cards. Some of these make it simple to set and stay within strict budget parameters. Others offer valuable benefits like the ability to rebuild a damaged credit history.

We're living through the toughest financial times in a century. Making good choices is critical. Start by accessing the tools and information that can make you a smarter financial consumer.

“you still have access to more financial tools, technology and information than ever before to help with that dollar stretch”

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# Panel of Experts



**DEBBIE CROWDER**  
EAST TENNESSEE REGION, CEO  
PRESIDENT, SUNTRUST

Americans are shifting their mindsets from living beyond their means to smart spending and saving in order to get themselves on solid ground. However, it is important for people to realize they are not alone in trying to figure out how best to go about this shift. They need to seek out a financial partner who will listen to them first, understand their needs, show respect, act with integrity, serve with a purpose and exceed expectations through service, advice and products.

At SunTrust, we have intensified our focus to help our clients get the basics right so that they can build a solid foundation and sharpen their focus on their future financial fitness. Whether it's helping our clients set up automated savings through our Get Started Savings program or providing them with guidance and advice to take them through their retirement planning, our clients benefit from effective solutions and practical answers to their financial needs. By getting their financial houses in order, they will understand what it means to Live Solid.



**TIM COLTRELL**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO, ACCOUNTNOW, INC

Our market is highly fragmented—some large competitors and thousands of small players. Most offer limited products and little service. As a result, our customers have been underserved. There's a ton of room to redress that balance. Take credit history. We were the first to offer the ability to connect bill paying with reporting to a credit agency, PBRC, which tracks that. From the beginning, our goal has been to become the trusted brand for pay transactions. We started with a strong core account offering—direct deposit, low fees, pre-paid debit card—and continually added functionality. Credit Builder is one example. Depositors can now add minutes automatically to pre-paid cell phones, which many of them use. We offer short-term loans to help deal with the kind of emergencies that happen to all of us, like the car breaking down. If you give people products and services they need at an attractive price, guess what? They take you up on it.



**STEWART A STOCKDALE**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT  
THE AMERICAS – WESTERN UNION

As Western Union, a global leader in money transfer services, expands its offerings, the company is tapping into consumer banking channels including:

Cash-to-Cash, Account-to-Cash, and Account-to-Account.

The prevailing need for banked and un-banked consumers to send money around the corner and the world brings a significant partnership opportunity to both banks and Western Union.

Western Union's recent agreement with U.S. Bank is part of the company's new focus on identifying and driving the development of best-in-class services to expand the company's business and better serve new consumer segments in the United States.

Western Union operates through a combined network of more than 375,000 Agent locations in 200 countries and territories.



**DR LINDA EAGLE**  
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER  
EDCOMM BANKER'S ACADEMY

Strong balance sheets and capital reserves are certainly essential, but beyond those, the most important influence on the bottom line is people. The greatest resource of any organization is the potential of its people and making those people as effective as possible is the best investment for a bank in these trying times. This is true across all areas and levels of the bank from the teller line to the boardroom. Need to have one hundred call center representatives doing the job of one hundred fifty? Improve their training and the training of their supervisors. Need top executives to restore morale after sweeping layoffs? Train them! Acquiring a bank or being acquired and need to quickly prepare a large group to sell and service new products and use new systems? Create eLearning training programs that can be taken on-demand by thousands at a time. Education is the way we improve ourselves throughout our lives, and through education we are able to improve the bottom line of our banks as well.

## Will Americans Seek Salvation in Savings?

*“Pay yourself first.”*

Americans are not big savers. Commerce Department statistics show monthly personal savings rates dropping from 7%-8% in the 1960s to 1%-2% in the first part of this century, often falling below 1% in recent years. Many experts think this could change, thanks to the shock to the system delivered by the global financial crisis. Short term, pulling out of the recession requires spending but in the long run, saving more will benefit both the nation and its citizens.

Long run is the concept to keep in mind. It's the only way to harness the power of compound interest — the most powerful force in the universe, some wise man once said. Even at a mod-

est 2.5% interest rate, \$5,000 saved annually grows to \$184,000 in 25 years and \$359,000 in 40.

“Everyone thinks if they can just get to that next level, \$40,000, \$50,000, whatever it is, they'll be on Easy Street,” says Sandra Young, executive vice president of Atlanta-based SunTrust Banks, Inc. “It's not necessarily what you earn, but what you keep.”

Young says one of the most important things anyone can do, regardless of age or income, is set financial goals, such as paying off loans or buying a house. Put a money figure on those goals and build a budget based on them. Include a savings plan, even though it's often hard to squeeze it in. The rule of thumb is save 10%-15% of gross income, but many find it easier to start at 5% or 6%. The key is to start — and stick with it.

Three factors to bear in mind are taxes, fees and risk, all of which can slow, or even erode, the growth of any nest egg. Tax advantaged retirement accounts — IRAs, 401(k)s — are the best way to keep Uncle Sam's hands off your money. Many employers offer matching contributions to 401(k) plans — tantamount to a tax-free raise or bonus. Not taking advantage is leaving free money on the table.

There are plenty of low and no-cost savings and investment options. Savings accounts and certificates of deposit, for example, cost the saver nothing. Index funds — mutual funds that approximate broad market indexes such as the S&P 500 — carry low fees and no up-front sales charge. It pays to read the fine print before handing over your hard-earned cash — so you know what it's costing. And remember that

most savings products offered by banks — CDs, money market funds, savings accounts — are insured by the federal government. Stocks, bonds and mutual funds generally are not.

The most important thing is to get into the game. “That old adage, ‘pay yourself first,’ is very important,” says Young.



# Old Idea, Cool New Tools

## Online Personal Finance is Making a Comeback

**W**ay back in the late 1990s, it seemed every bank offered depositors a way to aggregate data from multiple accounts to help organize their financial lives.

"That was the killer app," says Atakan Cetinsoy, vice president of personal finance for Strands Labs, Inc. "But it didn't take off."

There were plenty of reasons. Worries about conducting business or sharing personal information online. Concerns about security. Fear of identity theft. But with the passage of time, growing familiarity with the Internet, and

advances in technology, we feel more comfortable doing more online. In fact, opting out of the online world increasingly means losing access to the myriad benefits it offers.

A host of new personal finance tools make it easier, more efficient, more productive — even more fun — to get your arms around financial affairs online. Multiple budgeting, tax and general assistance Web sites are easy to access. Many are free. Some, such as Moneystrands from Strand Labs, take in information from checking, savings, credit card, loan and other accounts and helps users

set budgets, track account balances, and receive email alerts according to preset criteria. Moneystrands also serves up the best deals on products and services that match users' spending and savings patterns. And you can compare notes with like-minded — and similarly heeled — friends.

Does the future lie in Facebook for finances? Not necessarily, but online resources can help at a time when the need has never been greater. As Cetinsoy says, "How many people were putting 'budgeting tools' into Google a year ago?"

# Four Easy Steps to Online Security

**T**he information super-highway can seem like the old Wild West — few laws, fewer sheriffs and gangs of bad guys abound. The reality is, powerful security is at work — 24/7 — we just can't see it. By following four simple rules, we can go about our business online much as we do in the world of bricks and mortar.

**1.** When you go a Web site, make sure to find the locked-padlock icon embedded somewhere in the frame of your browser. This means the data you exchange — including financial information — is encrypted, or turned into code for its journey through the ether. It can't be waylaid by cyber-highwaymen.

**2.** Look for the bright green address bar. Newer generation Web browsers display a green background in the address box along with the name of the company whose Web site you are visiting. This tells you the browser, the Web site owner and an Internet security company have teamed up to confirm that you have not been diverted, or hijacked, onto a rogue site. "False sites are the biggest scam working today," says Tim Callan, vice president of product marketing for VeriSign, Inc., a provider of Internet infrastructure services.

**3.** The second biggest scam is malicious software, known as malware,

bugs that infect your computer. But "malware can not get into your computer unless you allow it," Callan says. Don't download anything from anywhere unless you are absolutely certain of the source and content.

**4.** Spam is a perennial problem. Beware email messages, instant messages or entreaties from social networking sites. Spam, in particular, will often try to frighten people into action — "Your account is about to be terminated!" Don't click on embedded links. Go to the Web site you normally use manually, by typing the address into your browser. If there's a problem, they'll tell you about it there.

# Staying Competitive: Finding the Right Payments Strategy

BY BRIAN SEIMS, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FIRST DATA

Payments are evolving. Buyers have many choices when purchasing in person, online, or as part of a business-to-business transaction.

Adopting an effective payment strategy helps businesses stay competitive and manage cash flow in this challenging economic environment.

"Payments continue to shift from cash and checks toward cards and other electronic payment forms," said David Fuller, SunTrust executive vice president of Treasury & Payment Solutions. "Businesses must find the right mix of solid payment solutions for today's customers and also look ahead to new technologies."

Businesses should seek out a partner with a full range of payment acceptance options and the expertise to tailor a payments program to the company's needs. For instance:

- Contactless readers at the point of sale can speed up the payment process, helping businesses such as quick-serve restaurants and coffee shops serve customers more efficiently.

- Gift card and loyalty programs can help businesses attract new customers and reward their best customers.

- Businesses can accept checks through their Web site or convert them to Automated Clearing House (ACH) transactions at the point of sale or in a back office, allowing for quicker deposits and faster insufficient funds notification.

Businesses can't make money if they can't take money. A comprehensive payments strategy makes it easier for customers to purchase products and services and helps a business manage overall cash flow, supporting success in a competitive environment.

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# Banking Alternatives Provide Access to Financial System

Imagine life today without a checking account. That's the reality for millions of Americans, complicating everything from shopping to bill paying to building, or rebuilding, a credit history.

Estimates place the number of Americans without access to banking services at more than 40 million. Some go as high as 80 million. The most common reasons are bad credit or credit related issues. A recent study by Web site BadCreditOffers.com found that more than 100 million Americans are affected by negative credit histories. This number will almost certainly grow as the recession sinks in its teeth.

"If people have been turned down

for a checking account last year and the year before that, how often are they going to go back and try again?" asks Tim Coltrell, president and chief executive officer of AccountNow, Inc., a fast growing company that provides alternative banking services.

Economists refer to these people as the "unbanked." Collectively, they account for \$200 billion in financial transactions annually, according to the Treasury Department. The most common resources they rely on are check cashing services, which charge a fee for cashing paychecks or extending small, short-term loans against the paycheck to come. A 2006 industry study by Mark S. Gottlieb, CPA, PC, found there are some 13,000

check-cashing outlets in the United States handling more than \$80 billion worth of checks annually. The problem can be high fees. The average unbanked person spends 10 percent of his or her net income on alternative financial services, according to the Gottlieb report.

Perhaps the oldest alternative to banks in the United States — for customers with and without bank accounts — is the iconic Western Union, founded in 1851. The \$5 billion global company is totally up to date today with more than 375,000 locations in 220 countries and territories, and a line-up of online, phone and walk-in services. Customers can transfer funds, purchase money orders, sign

up for electronic or cash payments services, and purchase pre-paid debit cards. This month, Western Union is test marketing a new product, MoneyWise, a pre-paid debit card that can be delivered overnight to a family member or friend and refilled remotely, including online.

"It's both a budgeting tool and a convenience," says Stewart Stockdale, executive vice president and president of the Americas. "It's a little like having a bank in your wallet."

In recent years, new competitors have sought a share of the unbanked market through lower prices and a wider range of products and services. For a single monthly fee, customers of AccountNow can arrange for direct

“The average un-banked person spends 10% of his or her net income on alternative financial services.”

deposit of paychecks, automatic payment of monthly bills and a pre-paid debit card. AccountNow also offers short-term loans. Perhaps most importantly for the long term, customers can rebuild their credit ratings through a program that reports bill payments to PBRC, a credit rating agency that tracks monthly bill payments.

Does CEO Tim Coltrell worry about losing business to traditional banks once customers establish their credit bona fides? "No, we're focused on the brand experience by redefining what banking services can be."



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John Leekley

# Remote Deposit Capture

BY: JOHN LEEKLEY, FOUNDER AND CEO, RemoteDepositCapture.COM

Remote Deposit Capture (RDC) allows a user to scan checks and create a digital deposit which then is transmitted to your bank. The basic requirements for RDC include a PC, an internet connection, a scanner and a service provider.

RDC technologies are evolving rapidly and now include browser-based solutions, the ability to integrate with accounting programs, and even the ability to use flatbed or all-in-one scanners many people already have. For improved performance and usability, a host of function-specific scanners are on the market which make using RDC even easier.

One of the biggest advantages of RDC is convenience. RDC provides the ability to deposit checks from your

desktop and eliminate the trip to the bank. Many solution providers offer later deposit deadlines, sometimes as late as 9PM. Additional benefits include efficiency gains, expense reduction, improved productivity and accelerated cash flow.

Getting up and running with RDC is easy. A growing number of financial institutions now offer the service. If your bank does not offer RDC, you can use a solution provider who can accept your deposits and credit the bank of your choosing.

Today, there are approximately 500,000 locations using RDC, from bank branches and corporate treasuries to small businesses and even consumers. RDC users have realized over \$1.3 Billion in cost savings, eliminated over 416 Million miles

in travel to and from the bank, and processed well over \$5 Trillion in deposits. The number of locations, and therefore the related benefits, are expected to grow tenfold over the next several years.

It is ironic that, as one of the greatest advancements in banking, Remote Deposit Capture eliminates the very need to go to the bank.

*John has over 19 years banking experience, the majority of which focused specifically upon cash management product management, strategy and development. Prior to starting RemoteDepositCapture.com, John held positions at HSBC Bank USA, Deutsche Bank, PriceWaterhouseCoopers Consulting, and has conducted independent consulting engagements for numerous Financial Institutions. Since founding RemoteDepositCapture.*

*com, Mr. Leekley has been a featured speaker at numerous industry & user conferences, annual meetings and industry gatherings. In addition to hosting the industry's first RDC Conference, Mr. Leekley is a primary resource to, and has been a featured speaker with the FFIEC, FDIC, US Treasury, Office of Thrift Supervision and the National Credit Union Administration.*

*About RemoteDepositCapture.com: RemoteDepositCapture.com is the leading independent information, products and services portal for the Remote Deposit Capture Industry. Founded in 2005, over 40,000 visitors per month visit to find news, information, solution provider directories, RDC calculators, the RDC Marketplace and more.*



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