



Fixed wireless access and the future of financial services

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Introduction

In an era of rapid technological advancement and evolving consumer expectations, traditional banking faces significant challenges. Financial institutions of all sizes are looking to gain a competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace, prompting banking leaders to revisit their operating models and explore innovative solutions that enhance their operations and customer service. Furthermore, many financial institutions constantly seek cost-effective ways to expand their services to customers in previously challenging locations.

As such, many business leaders in financial services are focused on balancing cost-cutting with growth. From banks enhancing the customer experience to insurance companies making calculated tech investments, this can be a tricky balance for the C-suite, especially when every dollar is carefully spent.

This is where fixed wireless access (FWA) can help. Not only does this solution provide financial services companies with valuable benefits – such as accelerated deployments, agility, enhanced security features, and a smooth transition from online to in-branch services – FWA's advanced technology can be a more cost-effective solution than traditional wireline options.

The increasing use of FWA enables business leaders to operate more efficiently and reduce costs, helping to usher financial services into a new era.

The pressures facing the financial services sector

According to research conducted by [Accenture](#), there are four significant developments impacting banks today:

- 1.** Advanced technology is now widely available.
- 2.** Rapidly rising interest rates are exposing banking weaknesses.
- 3.** Banks face stiff competition from fintech and new online financial services.
- 4.** Customer preferences, expectations, and behaviors are shifting.

Each of these developments exerts pressure on existing operating models, forcing financial institutions to balance the intelligent use of their capital with the need to pursue growth.

So how do financial institutions respond to these pressures, and what role does branch connectivity play in their efforts?





Unseen but critical: why connectivity is crucial in banking networks

While most customers will spend little time contemplating the connectivity underpinning their bank branch, they do recognize responsiveness and convenience. This is why reliable, agile, high-speed internet access is essential for modern banking operations. For processing routine transactions, powering increasingly digital services, or providing secure connectivity, a robust branch network infrastructure is critical.

Given the importance of connectivity, FWA – a type of wireless technology that provides fixed broadband access using radio frequencies instead of cables to transfer data – is revolutionizing today's banking networks. FWA at the branch site can be delivered via a small piece of networking equipment that connects to and utilizes LTE or 5G cellular networks through fixed networks and base stations.

FWA is not only quick to deploy and affordable – but it's also reliable and fast. It's scalable and can be deployed in rugged terrain or remote communities – anywhere a wireless signal is available. For these reasons, FWA is a compelling connectivity option, particularly for banks that operate in rural or underserved geographies.

It's essential to explore each benefit in greater detail to understand how the technology addresses the connectivity challenges financial institutions face.

Advantages of FWA in financial services

FWA offers several key features and benefits, making it an attractive connectivity solution for financial institutions. Here's an overview of some of its most compelling aspects.

Rapid deployments

The decision to establish a new branch – or maintain, relocate, or close an existing one – depends on a cost-benefit analysis. Given the costs associated with branch connectivity, fast installation times can accelerate the opening dates of new or relocating branches.

“FWA allows you to ship a box to a branch,” says Tony Lutz, Global Practice Leader Financial Services for Verizon Wireless. “Then, you simply take the router out of the box, plug it into electricity, connect other equipment to it, and you’re up and running.”

Wait times for cable to be installed to connect a branch can be lengthy. FWA can shorten the time needed to establish connectivity. And because it can be deployed using existing cell phone towers, FWA's lower infrastructure costs and an accelerated time to revenue can, in some circumstances, mean the difference between a branch being opened or not.





“We focus on several use cases where FWA works well in banking,” says Dee Dee Paré, Senior Product Marketing Manager with Ericsson Enterprise Wireless Solutions. “We call one of those use cases, ‘Day One,’ – meaning you can deploy an internet connection with FWA quickly, and there can be an immediate route to revenue the first day by enabling a branch to open faster.”

The agility and flexibility that FWA provides mean banks can seize opportunities in emerging markets or underserved communities in terms of their access to internet connectivity. Each of these market conditions allows financial institutions to expand their footprint quickly, promote financial inclusion, and do so without incurring excessive infrastructure costs.

“Additionally, in areas prone to natural disasters that often disrupt wired internet service, FWA is a logical and prudent choice for providing reliable branch connectivity during the most adverse weather conditions,” Lutz says.

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Global Practice Leader Financial Services for Verizon Wireless

Intelligent footprint management

FWA can play a significant role in helping financial institutions boost cost-effective management of branch real estate. By enabling connectivity at virtually any location, FWA can allow banks to consider properties they had previously ruled out due to the lack of traditional cabled infrastructure of establishing wired connectivity.

“Today, there’s a glut of available real estate. Banks seeking to take advantage of the favorable terms are shifting branch locations within just a few blocks to save. With FWA, relocation can be faster and simpler since they don’t have to wait for new wireline installation,” says Tova Osofsky, Senior Solutions Marketing Manager at Ericsson Enterprise Wireless Solutions. “They can do whatever makes financial sense very, very quickly.”

Consequently, FWA scalability can help banks to optimize their footprint without being limited by costly infrastructure investments. Banks can decommission a site if a branch location is no longer the best option.

This flexibility allows financial institutions to deploy innovative solutions for smaller markets. “A lot of banks are establishing a presence in grocery stores. It’s just one person in a grocery store now, where there is basically a teller, which makes those deployments really simple,” says Lutz. “You don’t need a complex solution to support these locations.”

“Another use case involves a low-gig plan,” says Paré. “The production networks of banks are secure and highly tuned, so adding projects to production networks requires significant scrutiny. Near-term banking projects requiring connectivity for non-critical items, such as digital signage, HVAC, or surveillance cameras may need to look to parallel, isolated networks with FWA,” adds Paré.

According to Paré, there’s also a final use case related to isolated networks in a specific scenario. “Often, banks or financial services will locate a micro branch within a large retail store to extend the bank’s reach to where the shoppers already are. This scenario is a ‘store in a store.’ For both the bank and the retail store, it’s unwise to share networking resources for security and agility reasons, so FWA can establish a secure, parallel network for the branch in the store,” adds Paré.



Customer experiences

In an increasingly digitized era, customers expect smooth and consistent experiences across every contact point in a bank's network. FWA provides fast and reliable connectivity, which helps banks to offer the same portfolio of digital products and services, regardless of a branch's location.

"You're not going to have the experience of standing in front of a teller and having them tell you to wait since their connection is slow," said Osofsky. "As 5G is rolled out, bandwidth will increase further and latency will drop even more."

She also sees an added benefit related to how a branch educates and entertains customers. "FWA supports remote points of presence, such as ATMs, kiosks, and digital signage, which can elevate the customer experience," adds Lutz. In-branch guest networks can also help customers pass the time while they wait in line for a teller, she notes.

These digital displays, which are often interactive, can educate customers about the bank's products and services and provide additional resources. They can also offer customized solutions based on the customer's banking history, personal profile, and financial situation.

Self-service technology, including tablets, can augment the role of the retail banker, streamline the customer's experience, and provide customers with the products and services that are most appropriate for their needs.

FWA can also help banks to leverage Internet of Things (IoT) devices to monitor branch traffic and wait times, optimizing staffing models to meet their internal customer service goals. "If there are any kind of sensors or customer counting devices, it gives you a way to monitor and improve the branch efficiencies," adds Paré.

With sufficient bandwidth at the branch, banks can extend the type and depth of services they provide customers by connecting them with specialists via video conferencing. Delivering this level of service in branches allows banks to stand out in crowded marketplaces while building customer trust and loyalty.

Just as importantly, FWA can support IoT devices designed to monitor and adjust heating and cooling for each branch to enhance customer comfort, help protect valuable equipment, and control costs. For example, IoT leak detection sensors can help reduce the potential damage from water leaks by alerting a branch to fix the issue while it is still manageable. In some cases, branches with these detection systems may be eligible for discounts on their insurance premiums.

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A secure and controlled environment

Physical and digital security are top concerns for every financial institution. Reliable, fast connectivity can allow institutions to adopt advanced physical and digital security measures for branches within their footprint.

“On a daily basis, people try to put chains around ATMs and haul them away on trucks. IoT monitoring devices connected via FWA can activate alarms and alert authorities to detect that kind of thing before there’s a lot of damage,” Osofsky says. This is particularly important for freestanding ATMs in parking lots that are not associated with branches.”

Since high-quality video surveillance is possible using FWA, banks can help improve branch and ATM security using the latest monitoring technologies.

Additionally, Ericsson Enterprise Wireless has developed a zero-trust Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) solution that is optimized specifically for 5G networks.

Simplifying connectivity management

In addition to its many operating advantages, Paré also adds that customers who switched from traditional wireline to fixed wireless access have benefitted from having a network with a nationwide footprint, supported by one single cellular provider, rather than managing multiple provider relationships.

“In some cases, customers needed a separate third party to manage all those ISP relationships,” she asserts. With a nationwide FWA provider, companies can contract with a single cellular connectivity provider across an entire country, which can mean fewer contracts to manage, systems to integrate, and costs to incur.

Nonetheless, larger institutions may choose to deploy FWA as a primary or secondary solution, along with a wired connection, depending on their operational requirements.





A game changer for distributed organizations

While banks continue to deploy FWA, the benefits of this connectivity extend far beyond the banking sector. Any company that operates multiple locations or has a mobile workforce can benefit from adopting FWA as its primary or secondary means of connectivity.

From pop-up tax preparation offices to insurance adjusters working in remote areas, healthcare facilities in underserved communities, and large call centers in rural areas, FWA can deliver high-performing connectivity.

As technology evolved, FWA emerged as a transformative solution ideally suited to branch networks or any other entity with distributed operations. FWA provides banks the agility and flexibility to respond quickly to an increasingly fast-paced and complex competitive environment.

Financial services' new era

FWA allows for rapid deployments, intelligent use of real estate, a responsive customer experience, and security. This solution will continue to play a critical role in shaping the future of banking and helping financial institutions of all sizes adapt and innovate in the digital age.



Verizon and Ericsson Enterprise Wireless Solutions are dedicated to supporting modern business leaders with FWA solutions that enhance operations and customer experiences.

To learn more about FWA and the connectivity available for your business, please contact your Verizon Client Partner and/or check out the [Verizon](#) and [Ericsson](#) financial services resource pages.



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