



## INTERVIEWPOINT: SMALL BUSINESS LENDING

Kari Taylor, Associate Editor

**NAME:** David Rahn**OCCUPATION:** President and CEO of First Foundation Bank**LOCATION:** Irvine, Calif.

**BACKGROUND:** Prior to joining First Foundation, a \$130 million asset de novo, Rahn served as the senior vice president, Southern California regional manager for wealth management at Bank of the West, headquartered in San Francisco. Rahn also previously served as the statewide California market manager of private banking for Dallas-based Comerica Bank. Rahn earned his bachelor of science degree from California State Polytechnic University in Pomona. He completed his master's in business administration at the University of Redlands, Calif.

Photograph courtesy of FIRST FOUNDATION BANK

**Western Banking:** What percentage of the bank's total portfolio are small business loans?

**David Rahn:** First Foundation is a de novo bank with 18 months of experience providing services and products tailored to business entrepreneurs, which is a core part of its business plan. Small businesses and their owners are a large component of the bank's current business.

**WB:** Does the bank target a specific small business market, such as manufacturing or retail?

**DR:** The bank's small business clients tend to be professional service businesses like advertising, attorneys, doctors, CPAs or entrepreneurial investors who buy and build business values in a variety of industries and niches. It is an extension of the types of clients who use the services of our investment management affiliate, The Keller Group Investment Management Inc., and the services offered by our high net-worth planning and private foundation management affiliate, [First Foundation Advisors](#). Also, our shorter-than-industry turnaround time on new financing requests ensures that our deal-making clients can meet their tight deadlines. We are also committed to giving a quick response to clients' requests, especially if the answer is no. And if we say yes, we will beat the industry norm by getting the job done quickly.

**WB:** Why should a small business borrow from First Foundation Bank instead of a competitor?

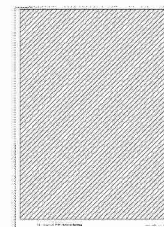
**DR:** First Foundation provides its services through a private banker whose responsibilities include not only introducing the client to our services but also providing continuing support and assistance after the sale. Our bankers are available to their clients at all times, so the response time for adding new products and services is minimized. Our breadth of services in the bank, and those available from our affiliates, give our clients an opportunity to meet their financial, estate planning and family goals within a boutique bank.

**WB:** What types of programs does the bank offer small businesses?

**DR:** The bank offers all the services that define today's banking environment at prices that are extremely competitive. These services include checking, cash management, loans, online services and remote capture.

**WB:** Does First Foundation Bank offer other services to small business owners and/or management, such as wealth management?

**DR:** First Foundation Bank's trust department provides a full range of personal trust services including estate settlement, personal trust administration, business escrows and life insurance trusts. First Foundation Inc., the holding company for First Foundation Bank, provides comprehensive investment management options, family office, private foundation services, wealth management



services through its affiliates, First Foundation Advisors and The Keller Group Investment Management Inc.

**WB:** Has your small business lending increased or decreased in the past year and why?

**DR:** Our lending activity has increased as our organization has gained recognition in the marketplace and as our capital structure and quality loan portfolio have allowed us to lend when other organizations are distracted by other banking challenges.

**WB:** Do you foresee any changes or challenges for small business lending in the future?

**DR:** The biggest challenge is the fundamentally and dramatically changed marketplace that has evolved since

**"SMALL BUSINESSES HAVE SPECIAL  
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August of 2007. Small businesses have special challenges in navigating in these economic waters. Valuations for their buildings are declining, their income is often less and yet, more than ever, they need to make prudent decisions to use scarce resources to secure tomorrow's opportunities. Because we have operated only during this timeframe, we understand and have successfully learned the lessons of this unique time in history. **WB**