

## Banks offering new feature: video tellers Orange County's first PTM coming soon

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By Christian Livermore

Banks, like other industries, have competed for customers by offering increasingly sophisticated technology.

ATMs. Online banking. Account information on their hand-helds. (All of which increased customers' ability to check their balance at 3 a.m., but decreased their contact with actual human beings.)

A local credit union has been installing a system that gives customers 24-hour banking, but still lets them work with a person.

Sort of.

By the end of November, Mid-Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union will install in its Newburgh branch a "personal teller machine."

It will be the first in Orange County, and one of the only ones in the state.

The system, created by Utah-based uGenius Technology, lets customers bank 24 hours a day at a PTM just as they would at an ATM, except by interacting with a teller via a video screen.

Customers touch a screen to connect with a teller, who is stationed at a central location — in this case, the credit union's main office in Kingston — and make deposits, withdrawals, or whatever else they need to do. ID and debit cards are scanned to verify identity and account information.

It's not exactly Hal, but it ain't George Bailey, either.

Bob Michaud, the credit union's senior vice president of marketing, said the system combines the convenience of an ATM with the personal touch of a teller.

"At the end of the day, for our company to deliver exemplary customer service, it involves putting our members in touch with live tellers," he said.

### Long-distance tellers

Jed Taylor, executive vice president and COO of uGenius, believes the PTM system is the future of banking. Instead of building large branches, banks can use PTMs to provide service without the expense of brick-and-mortar branches.

"People are just kind of coming out of the doldrums of these financial problems, and saying we need to reduce costs but still provide service and do it in a different way," he said. "This is a different way."

The PTM reduces the need for workers by allowing a few centralized tellers to help clients over a wide geographical area, even thousands of miles away.

"In larger deployments, we've seen reductions of almost a half of their teller staff," Taylor said.

Kingston resident Chelsea McDonough likes the service.

"I think you feel more comfortable talking to someone rather than typing in the amount on a machine," she said.

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Personal Teller Machines allow ATM users to talk with a bank teller, who might be thousands of miles away.

Provided: Mid-Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union