



Executive Profile: One on One with David Reiling, Sunrise Banks



Sunrise Banks has built its brand by looking out for the little guy and having a positive social impact. When you meet CEO David Reiling, it's easy to understand why.

An Olympic swimming hopeful with entrepreneurialism in his blood, Reiling gave up swimming after blowing out an eardrum at age 14. "It was a turning point in terms of my identity and what I would do, what I would be," he explains.

Channeling the discipline and dedication he'd given to competitive swimming, the St. Paul, Minn., native followed in the footsteps of his father, a poor farm kid turned entrepreneur and banker. Although his first venture was a T-shirt business he started at the University of San Diego—which Reiling describes as a good way for a shy Catholic kid to meet girls—he would come to embrace banking and his father's mantra: "When you give the little guy a fair deal, he's a customer that will stick with you."

Banking at Gunpoint

After selling his T-shirt business in 1989, Reiling began a summer job as a bank teller at a south central Los Angeles branch. That's when he found his true calling, despite being robbed three times his first week. "I thought it was exciting and I understood how it worked," Reiling says of banking (not the robberies). "It was a small branch," he recalls. "I loved the money business and the people."

Reiling got to know the FBI agents by name and became the go-to guy for anything that needed to be done at the branch, which had no managers. As invaluable as the experience was, Reiling decided to move to a job at Citibank, which took him downtown. "After the third time I had a gun pointed at me, I realized my luck would only last so long," he says of his decision to take the job at Citibank.

A year later, a call from his father back in St. Paul led to another career move. "Dad called and said a bank was for sale in St. Paul and I should take a look." By 1994, Reiling acquired Meridian Bank, which became University Bank, got married and moved back to St. Paul, where he would eventually enter business with his father.

"The bank was in the neighborhood my Italian immigrant grandmother had lived, so I knew the environment," he says. "It was rough, but it was something I understood. We began and continue to design programs aimed at lifting people up by listening to them," Reiling explains. "You have to listen and figure out their problems. If you do, you will go a long way."

In His Own Words Who has influenced me most ...

My dad's Catholic faith and his sense of morality shaped him and our family. My Italian grandmother was a super cook and a gentle, wonderful person. She was so nurturing. My dad's mom was 100 percent German and her thinking was: 'We will work from the morning sun till the sun goes down.' They were great influences in my life.



David Reiling

When I'm not in the office ...

I'm always on the go. I'm exercising, driving kids to school or sporting events, walking the dogs with my wife, trying new restaurants and a few old favorites, and traveling for business or pleasure. And, I'm dreaming about surfing in the tropics.

What keeps me up at night ...

Missing good business opportunities, regulations (new and old) and regulators (new and old).

What keeps me grounded ...

I prefer experiences over things. I prefer a simple life. I'm thankful and I'm grateful for a healthy and loving family. My wife and kids keep me grounded.

Something not many people know ...

I love kindred spirits, so I like to hang out with other entrepreneurs. I love whiteboards and erasable walls.

Executive Profile: One on One with David Reiling, Sunrise Banks

A Guiding Force

Reiling's career, like his life, has had one major force. His father. "Dad is tough but fair. He and I are a lot alike," Reiling notes. "We've always gotten along because we have open and honest conversations. ... Often, he'll go left and I'll go right, but we wind up in exactly the same place."

Since 2004, Reiling has been running the bank holding company born of acquisitions and mergers of banks that became Sunrise Banks in 2013. He is focused on growth and financial performance, but he says the real spotlight is on something more. "It's the mission and values that create social impact that remain so important to me. Our business lines will always be held to two goals: financial sustainability and positive social impact. Everything we do reflects both.

"I used to pull up a chair next to bank teller lines and talk to people about their

views and needs," Reiling continues. "I walked around neighborhoods. I talked and I listened." That's where he learned about prepaid. The advent of prepaid at Sunrise came from watching Hmong immigrants—an ethnic group from the mountainous regions of China, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand—use prepaid cards. "I see prepaid as full of opportunities to help the un- and under-banked enter the financial system in a successful, fairly priced and transparent way. It's access and convenience. There are no gotchas. It's a more efficient system than brick-and-mortar checking accounts and the distribution network is much wider," explains Reiling.

"Our business lines will always be held to two goals: financial sustainability and positive social impact. Everything we do reflects both."

Increasing compliance costs and complexity have been a challenge, but the bank is moving forward as a third-party issuer. Reiling sees the value in prepaid and will continue exploring new ways to meet consumer needs.

"We've tried all sorts of products and services. Some work, some don't. The fact is you have to keep trying. It's the willingness to fail and be okay with it—that's in our DNA. We keep trying and if our moral compass is right, we'll be fine. Wrong turns, wrong partners and vendors lead to more knowledge and reinventing yourself to be successful." 