




## Savings Bank of Mendocino County Makes Banking Easier and More Secure

**OVERVIEW**



**Customer:** Savings Bank of Mendocino County  
**Industry:** Financial Services  
**Headquarters:** Ukiah, CA, USA  
**Coverage:** Regional

**Kiteworks Capabilities Used:**

- Email
- File Transfer
- Automated File Transfer
- File Sharing
- APIs
- Web Forms

### Putting Customers First Never Goes Out of Style

Globalization, facilitated by the internet and free trade, has made the world smaller. Yet, local communities still matter. Cultural events like county fairs, farmers’ markets, Little League baseball, and Independence Day parades down Main Street are hallmarks of American communities and have returned to their pre-pandemic glory. Savings Bank of Mendocino County (Savings Bank) embraces its community roots and has proudly served its local community members and their small businesses for over 115 years. The bank, in fact, annually supports over 150 local nonprofit organizations. Bank employees volunteer thousands of hours, and the bank matches employees’ financial contributions to these causes.

**“Kiteworks gives our customers confidence. Confidence in their exchanges with us and confidence in the bank.”**

**– Pete Dodson, Head of Retail and Small Business Lending, Savings Bank of Mendocino County**

### Bringing Cutting-edge Technology to Small-town Banking Customers

For a 100-year-old financial institution operating in a rural part of California 100 miles north of San Francisco, Savings Bank is a forward-looking bank. Bank leadership hired Jim Ratchford to set the bank’s technology vision and strategy.

As Chief Information Officer, Ratchford looks constantly for ways to improve the bank’s position in a competitive marketplace. He knows a convenient banking experience is a key differentiator. His team, therefore, has made several investments aimed at enhancing communications and transactions between the bank and its customers and partners.

This includes Kiteworks. Ratchford views Kiteworks less a digital transformation initiative and more of a part of the bank’s evolution. “The bank is always moving forward,” he shares. “Kiteworks allowed us to ‘pick up the pace,’ and move forward more quickly.”

Security is another priority and investment driver for Ratchford. “We live not only in a digital world but also in an unsafe one. The bad guys have learned you don’t need to walk into a bank to steal money anymore. With Kiteworks, we raise the level of trust with our customers; they know that we take the protection of their sensitive information very seriously.”

## Enhancing the Borrowing Experience With Convenience and Security

Savings Bank deployed Kiteworks in 2011 and uses it extensively to exchange sensitive financial information like loan documents and financial statements with its customers and partners.

Pete Dodson and his lending team, for example, rely on the Kiteworks Private Content Network to propel retail and small business loans from application to financing. Dodson's team regularly sends emails to lenders requesting documents. Borrowers set up an account with Kiteworks and upload the requested documents into folders. Their information is always encrypted, whether in transit or at rest. To ensure requested materials are posted in a timely manner, the lending team sets an expiration date, and the lender receives reminder emails as the due date nears. By automating this process, Dodson's team spends their valuable time on higher-level priorities instead of chasing lenders.

While some customers still use USB drives or links to consumer file sharing sites like Dropbox to share documents, Dodson estimates 95% of Savings Bank's lending customers use Kiteworks. "Adoption has been very good," Dodson summarizes. "Convenience is the key. If Kiteworks is convenient—and it is—then our customers will use it."

Dodson has also used Kiteworks on several large projects. The bank, for example, recently managed a bond finance for a low-income housing project that involved numerous participants. The bank utilized Kiteworks to provide anytime access to countless documents that needed to be reviewed, edited, and approved by partner banks and attorneys.

Kiteworks is utilized by other departments, too. Savings Bank's human resources team uses Kiteworks to share employment records with its lawyers and insurance vendors. The finance team uses Kiteworks to share tax documents with its accounting firm. The bank's internal audit, electronic banking, and technology departments use Kiteworks to share confidential documents with external auditors like the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and State of California. The documents are always encrypted and recipients must authenticate their identity prior to accessing the information.

Dodson summarizes, "By getting everyone internally and externally to use Kiteworks, we're able to verify the solution's security rather than having to guess with other solutions."

### Needs

- A simple, secure, and auditable solution for retail and small business borrowers to upload loan applications containing sensitive financial information
- A virtual data room for internal and external partners to access confidential financial data related to large, complex financing projects
- A secure means to exchange private compliance and tax records regularly with advisors, auditors, and regulatory agencies

### Kiteworks Solution

- A secure and convenient email and folder system that requests documentation, sends reminders, and notifies bank employees when borrowers upload loan documents
- Secure shared folders in which bank employees can control access, be notified when users download, edit, or upload content, and have an audit trail of all folder activities
- A private, protected communication channel that encrypts sensitive information and ensures only authorized recipients can access the information

### Business Impact

- A positive lending experience, marked by a secure and easy-to-use application process, that instills trust and confidence with borrowers
- A more efficient lending team that can "set-and-forget" reminders and deadlines for loan documents
- Improved data protection and governance, enabled by a standardized solution for sending, receiving, sharing, and monitoring sensitive financial information with customers and partners

## Protecting Sensitive Information Is Good for Customers and Good for Savings Bank

Kiteworks continues to help Savings Bank operate efficiently and effectively. Annual audits, for example, are complicated and onerous in normal times, but even more so during a global pandemic. With everyone working remotely, bank employees were unable to hand financial documents over to visiting auditors. Kiteworks, however, enabled bank employees to send needed documents to auditors simply and securely. Bank employees continued the practice post-pandemic, sending encrypted confidential financial documents ahead of an auditor's visit, ensuring time spent on-site is focused on answering questions rather than reviewing documents.

Dodson attributes Kiteworks' wide adoption to its ease of use and the value the platform provides to employees. "With Kiteworks, it's easy to create a file and invite users," Dodson shares. "Whenever our employees upload a document to a project folder, everyone involved in the project who has access to that folder receives a notification that a new file has been uploaded. Our employees can also see who has viewed and downloaded files to ensure their lending projects stay on track."

Trish Beltrami, IT Manager at Savings Bank, agrees. She sees value in having a standard solution that transfers sensitive documents efficiently. "The move to paperless banking put a strain on our email servers. Financial documents like borrower loan applications or our own tax returns, in PDF form, are very large files. Traditional email servers simply can't handle that load, but Kiteworks can and does."

While ease of use and efficiency are certainly important, Savings Bank values Kiteworks most of all for protecting customers' sensitive information. "Kiteworks gives our customers confidence. Confidence in their exchanges with us and confidence in the bank," Dodson summarizes. "By using Kiteworks, we convey to our customers that we take security seriously."

Ratchford concurs, "Kiteworks doesn't need to be a 'Superman-type' of solution that saves the day. Rather, it's a quiet solution that works behind the scenes, providing our customers a secure way to do business with us. Kiteworks puts our bank in a position where we benefit from greater security."

**"With Kiteworks, we raise the level of trust with our customers; they know that we take their sensitive information seriously."**

**– Jim Ratchford, Chief Information Officer, Savings Bank of Mendocino County**