

## Bosek: “We want to become a multi-channel bank”

15.06.2011

Survey by Integral confirms: Customers expect mobile banking

45% of smart phone owners want to check their bank accounts via cell phone

New iPhone APP and mobile banking for all smart phones as of 25 June

Customers can develop net banking APPs themselves

New communication media: Facebook, video consulting and webinars

“Nothing can replace personal interaction with human beings,” said Peter Bosek, Member of the Management Board of Erste Bank. “But we want to be a multi-channel bank that gives customers access to consulting and services via all channels.” Thus, the management of Erste Bank Oesterreich views this direction as the clear strategy for the future: In addition to the traditional retail branch business, the focus is now also the new forms of communication. “This is an absolutely necessary supplement. Banks also need to understand that social media and mobile communication are increasingly becoming routine activities.”

### Bank transactions over the smart phone have become “commonplace”

A majority of Austrians expect banks to optimize their net banking services for smart phones. According to the latest survey conducted by Integral, expectations refer to simple banking transactions and service applications. One fourth of smart phone users want to execute funds transfers via their cell phones, 45% want to check their accounts and 41% expect a simple way of blocking credit and ATM cards in case of loss or theft. Internet use was 80% in the second quarter 2011 and the trend is clearly moving towards mobile touch phones. One third of Austrians (i.e. 43% of Internet users) already own a smart phone and the willingness to install APPs is very high. A share of 68% of users have already installed APPs, and 21% know how it works, only 11% do not know how to install an APP[1] on a cell phone.

### Mobile net banking and new iPhone APP

Erste Bank and Sparkassen are responding to the smart phone boom in Austria. After the launch of the basic version in the autumn of 2010, optimised mobile net banking for iPhone users has become reality: The new iPhone net banking APP offers the possibility to execute funds transfers, query accounts, check credit card purchases, and immediately block bank cards and credit cards. A highlight is the fast “iPhone 2 iPhone” funds transfer via bluetooth. Two iPhone users can transfer funds in real time from one cell phone to another. To do so, both users must have activated the phone’s bluetooth function and be logged into netbanking. “This is an especially practical function for repaying a loan to a friend or colleague quickly, for example.” The free iPhone net banking APP will be available for downloading as of 25 June 2011 at the Austrian Apple APP Store. The new APP includes the functions of the first version such as the GPS finder for ATM and branches, access to current research news and foreign currency exchange rates.

For all other smart phones, a mobile Internet portal with net banking is now available that automatically adapts the application to the display of the respective cell phone maker. This application was developed in collaboration with YOC Central Eastern Europe GmbH. A separate netbanking APP for the rapidly growing operating system Android is planned for the end of 2011.



### **Search for test users and bloggers for the further development of the applications**

"By entering this field, we are showing that social media is not just a fad for us," explained Peter Bosek regarding this new approach to software development. As of immediately, Erste Bank and Sparkassen are looking for test users to thoroughly test the new iPhone net banking-APP and the mobile net banking applications for all smart phones. Persons from throughout Austria interested in acting as testers can apply at <http://modernsteskonto.erstebank.at> and register as test users. Three iPads will be raffled among all applicants. In the end, a selection is made and afterwards testers blog in regular intervals about their experiences with mobile netbanking and the iPhone APP. Anyone can comment on the first user reports, of course, and publish their opinions on the themes. The areas of improvement and proposals for further development will be forwarded directly to the software development team that will take a serious look at the proposals. After investigating, potential enhancements will be sent to the users per update. "We are the first Bank in Austria to actually live the social media," stressed Mr. Bosek. Applications for test users can be submitted until 11 July, after this date the blog starts.

### **Social media, customer chats and web consulting**

"Communication with customers is not only becoming more mobile, but also more diverse," stated Mr. Bosek. While many companies are still ignoring platforms like Facebook or only set up a static presence, Erste Bank presents itself there as an open and communicative partner. "Apart from current information and prize games, we also ask ourselves critical questions. We had to learn to feel comfortable with this open dialogue." But the fact that this demand is very real is seen in the steeply rising Facebook figures: 2.5 million Austrians are already active users of this platform, and the fan pages of Erste Bank are also growing: [www.facebook.com/erstebank](http://www.facebook.com/erstebank) and [www.facebook.com/erstebank.sparkasse](http://www.facebook.com/erstebank.sparkasse).

A further measure that Erste Bank is conducting as a pilot project is webinars for customers on the topic of foreign currency loans. Over 170 customers took part in the first seven webinars. A further 400 customers were invited by phone to join a web consulting session. At these individual consulting sessions on the web, an Erste Bank expert communicates in a web meeting via video with customers who usually participate from home. The individual measures that can be taken to reduce the risks of foreign currency loan exposures due expected interest rate trends and currency developments are discussed with each customer. It is not necessary to install any software on the customer side, as the web consulting uses an online software application. In May, 25 web consultations were completed successfully and a further 100 have been scheduled with customers. Another project that we are currently investigating is the consultant chat. Customers can communicate directly via the website per chat with an employee and ask questions that are then answered in real time. "We want to expand these services in order to ensure that we can be easily reached online as well in addition to our branches and telephone services," added Mr. Bosek.



[Download \[jpg; 661.0 KB\]](#)

---

[APP-Banking - Only a hype? \[pdf; 4.1 MB\]](#)

[1] Application: Applications for smart phones that can be acquired via the integrated online shop and installed directly onto the smart phone.