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Editor's Choice | Finance | Shaoling Combs, Banc of California

## TOP 50 **WOMEN** In Business *Banking on success*

By **Amber Hair**  
Staff Writer

Shaoling Combs grew up in the banking world.

Combs, the executive vice president of branch administration at Banc of California, officially has 35 years in banking, but unofficially, she has 41 years.

Those 'unofficial' years came from watching and helping her mother. Combs' mother was a bank manager, but as a Taiwanese immigrant, she wasn't always confident about her written English skills when it came time to give employee reviews for the tellers she worked with.

Combs — from the time she was in middle school — helped her mother write the reviews.

Combs herself started working in the banking industry as a part-time teller in college.

"It was really the only thing I knew, so I entered it and loved it immediately," Combs said. "I never really felt like I earned my paycheck because I was having so much fun living it."

In her role overseeing branch administration, Combs is in charge of everything that happens in a brick-and-mortar branch — including managing employees, customer service and ordering supplies.

She keeps an eye on "well over" 80 branches, with locations as far north as Paso Robles and Fresno and as far south as the border.

Her favorite part of the job is the people she works with — both within the bank and the bank's clients.

"Nothing feels better than watching a client go from a one-man physician's office to a major medical group," Combs said, "or a supermarket go from one location to five."

She also has a personal milestone.

"I can't wait to work for someone I've mentored," Combs said. "That will tell me I've accomplished what I've set out to do."

Combs' relationships with her clients and her team came in clutch during last year's liquidity crisis when all eyes were on every bank.

"It was a time where there was a lot of panic," Combs said.

At that time, Combs was working with Pacific Western Bank, as the merger between Pacific Western and Banc of California hadn't yet been announced or finalized.

To ride out the storm, Combs decided to overcommunicate.

Chris Blake, the president of community banking at Banc of California, has been Combs' direct supervisor in the past, including when the liquidity crisis happened while they were both at Pacific Western.

He said she "really stepped up during a time when the bank was struggling."

Combs met "daily" with her direct reports to keep them focused on retaining deposits and encouraging new deposits. To that end, her team generated hundreds



COURTESY PHOTO

Shaoling Combs, the executive vice president of branch administration for Banc of California, has 'officially' been in banking for 35 years.

of millions of dollars in deposits with thousands of new accounts, and all of those accounts had to be brought on board manually.

"It wasn't some online digital bank account opening," Blake said. "It had to be done in the office."

He admires the passion and knowledge Combs has for her work, as well as how she worked her way up through the ranks.

"In difficult times, peoples' characters really come out, and it could be good or bad," Blake said. "She really shined."

A year out, the liquidity crisis is in the rearview window, and Combs is focused on creating new relationships in the post-merger Banc of California and figuring out the best ways for the two banks to move forward as one.

"By combining forces, processes might look a little different," Combs said, "but it'll allow people to learn something new and contribute in new areas."

Combs is also active in the community. She just finished a 10-year run as a board member at the Good Samaritan Shelter in Santa Barbara, which provides housing, education and career help for homeless people. She also works with Partners in Education, a local non-profit dedicated to going into high schools and preparing them for the workforce.

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**Shaoling Combs**  
*EVP, Branch Administration*  
Banc of California

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**In her own words:**

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