



RankingBanking

08/25/2025

2025 RANKINGBANKING REPORT:WHAT IT TAKES TO BE THE BEST

Bank Director’s annual ranking of the 300 largest publicly traded banks highlights the strategies behind the success of some of the best performers.

BANK DIRECTOR RESEARCH GROUP

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What makes a top performing bank? It’s a question that Bank Director tackles every year, and a few themes emerge.

One could be that the bank has a unique strategy that it has mastered. “I think it’s more important that you stick with your strategy,” says Kara Baldwin, a partner and the financial services audit leader at Crowe. “What’s your bank’s vision, and what is the strategy to get there? If you’re going to have something that’s novel and unique, be the best at that.”

This is the case for **1st Source Corp.** in South Bend, Indiana, and **Nicolet Bankshares** in Green Bay, Wisconsin. 1st Source focuses on niche areas such as construction equipment and air–craft financing, while Nicolet is mainly a lender of commercial and industrial loans in smaller markets where they can better connect with customers. Both institutions ranked well on this year’s **RankingBanking**. The analysis is sponsored by accounting and consulting firm Crowe. Each year, the list ranks the 300 largest publicly traded banks on profitability, capital adequacy and credit quality. This year’s ranking uses year-end 2024 data from S&P Global Market Intelligence, analyzed by Piper Sandler & Co.

Being an active acquirer is another attribute for several of the banks on this year’s list. “There is certainly the theory that scale is going to drive profitability and that it’s going to drive efficiency,” says Mandi Simpson, a partner and leader of the accounting advisory team at Crowe.

Columbia Banking System in Tacoma, Washington, completed a transformative merger of equals with Umpqua Holdings Corp. in 2023 and announced another significant deal earlier this year with its planned purchase of Pacific Premier Bancorp in Irvine, California. Columbia came in at No. 2 for banks with at least \$50 billion in assets.

Banks in California dominated the list this year, posting strong financial returns and making up seven of the top 25 spots. “Generally, if you have a higher [return on assets] compared to peers, you may have a lower [return on equity] compared to peers or vice versa,” Simpson says. “But [California banks] nailed it at both.” One California bank highlighted this year, East West Bancorp in Pasadena, achieved its success, in part, by helping its customers navigate uncertainty around tariffs.

Whatever their business models, **these top performers shined**.

Click **here** to access the complete RankingBanking study.

The ranking identifies the top 25 U.S. banks, and ranks all 300 by asset size:

The Top 25 Banks

\$50 Billion and Above

\$5 Billion to \$50 Billion

Less Than \$5 Billion

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