INTERVIEW Global Transaction Banking

Pioneering a New Era of Payments with SMBC Connect

Launch of a Globally Connected Payment and Cash Management Platform

As our customers' businesses become increasingly globalized through the use of digital technologies, SMBC Group launched SMBC Connect, a new brand integrating global transaction banking services (payments and cash management), in April 2026. Leaders from each region shared their insights regarding the strategy that we are envisioning to build a globally-connected payment and cash management platform.

Becoming a Partner that Creates Value Together with Customers

Ikeda To achieve the Vision and goals set forth in the new Medium-Term Management Plan, global transaction banking is positioned as a key growth driver. As companies accelerate their overseas expansion, customer needs for cash management and payment solutions are rapidly becoming more sophisticated. What we are aiming for is to evolve from simply being a financial service provider offering payment functions, into a partner that deeply engages with our customers' business operations and management processes, generating substantial value. As a core initiative in this regard, we launched SMBC Connect in April 2026. SMBC Connect is a new brand that comprehensively supports the transaction banking needs of our customers operating globally. Under this brand, by providing a platform that seamlessly connects all processes related to our customers' cash management, payments, and treasury management, we will advance the development of globally consistent solutions.

SMBC Connect

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Vaream In the U.S., we fully launched SMBC Connect in June 2026. SMBC Connect dramatically improves customer convenience by offering an intuitive user interface configured based on customer feedback, flexible user permission settings, digitization of various procedures, and enhanced multi-currency management functions. Furthermore, the development of SMBC Connect has progressed agilely, with functions being improved and added while incorporating direct feedback from our customers. Going forward, we plan to sequentially develop services with even higher added value for our customers, such as expanding FX payment functions and AI-powered support features.

Robson The launch in the U.S. is only the starting point for SMBC Connect. We will expand its deployment to Asia and Europe going forward. In Europe, we also fundamentally reviewed the account opening and onboarding processes, significantly reducing the procedural burden on our customers. Smoothing out processes that tend to be a challenge for many banks is an important step toward meeting customer expectations. Despite differences in regulations and market environments across countries and regions, we pride ourselves on our strength in collaborating as a global team and achieving both region-specific solutions and global consistency. SMBC Connect, as the culmination of these efforts, will connect our customers to a variety of possibilities through its services and accompany them on their business growth and transformation journeys.

Sethi In building the global platform we aspire to, what will be important is the existence of an organizational culture and DNA deeply rooted within SMBC Group. I believe that embracing, understanding, and putting it into practice are the starting points for successful transformation. The fact that we were able to release SMBC Connect with the business, product, and technology teams working as one, directly incorporating customer feedback, is testament to that. Despite being a large organization with a 400-year history, we are tackling this transformation with the agility of a startup, and I am convinced this will become our greatest differentiating factor from our competitors. Going forward, we will establish an architecture that balances global standardization with flexible responses to unique regional needs. We will also establish a system that can widely provide high-quality services while utilizing specialized knowledge from each region as a shared asset.

Transformation and a New Level of Convenience Driven by AI

Srinivasan AI plays a fundamental role in our transformation, both in terms of transforming SMBC Group itself and in providing value to our customers. SMBC Group is accelerating the implementation of AI, and its application areas are rapidly expanding, from streamlining user experience (UX) design and automating code generation/testing, to enhancing compliance operations like anti-money laundering, and providing real-time customer and market information to the front office. In providing value to customers, how the product integrates into the customer's management process is more important than the cash management or payment product itself. For example, by deeply integrating with customers' core business systems and automating accounts receivable and payable processes using AI, we can increase customer productivity and reduce errors. Furthermore, we are also developing solutions that actively support our customers' financial decision-making, such as developing dashboards through co-creation with their CFO teams. On top of that, SMBC Connect connects to all channels, including APIs and host-to-host connections, to provide new value to our customers' transactions.

Sethi In addition, we are also developing an AI-powered chatbot for SMBC Connect. We plan to integrate it into the production environment soon as a complement to user support, and the entire team is excited about the new convenience it will bring to our customers.

Ikeda Even in utilizing AI, it is crucial to understand our customers and how we can accompany them on their business transformation through our products. By continuing to expand our talent base of specialists, we strive to embody our Vision of being "Globally connected. Rooted in Japan. Your most trusted partner."

As a core engine of SMBC Group's growth, transaction banking plays a vital role in strengthening the Group's brand, profitability, and overall financial resilience. By advancing process transformation through AI, expanding and evolving SMBC Connect, strengthening our sales framework, and renewing our product lineup, we will significantly elevate our global competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth as a trusted partner to our customers.

SMBC Group will continue to connect businesses, regions, and people going forward.