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ASB launches 'world's first Virtual Branch' on Facebook

By Nick Jones interest.co.nz

ASB is launching a banking service via Facebook, creating what it's calling a world-first 'Virtual Branch'.

Users will be able to log on to the service through Facebook anywhere in the world and have real-time, secure and private conversations with ASB staff, the bank says.

The Virtual Branch is open from 8am to 9pm seven days a week, and will be staffed through ASB's NZ-based contact centre. ASB general manager for internet banking Anna Curzon said the Virtual Branch was being launched on an initial trial basis to gauge customer interest.

"Customers will be able to chat with our dedicated team about any issues - from home loan options, to simple savings tips, or how to access foreign currency for an overseas trip. The Virtual Branch will be able to carry out the same services as our contact centre," she said.

"We believe this is the first 'Virtual Branch' application of its kind to be launched by a bank on Facebook anywhere in the world."

Curzon said, however, she expected ASB's regular internet banking services to still be used for most online transactions.

Curzon said the Facebook move was recognition that customers were increasingly using social media. ASB's Twitter account, opened last year, now has about 1,200 followers.