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Community Banker

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WHEN IS A GUARANTEE NOT A GUARANTEE?

Linda R. Nelson

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**A SALES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:
IMPROVING SALES AND BUILDING BETTER CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS**

Paul A. Melton

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TELEPHONE SELLING AND SERVICING

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ARKANSAS COMMUNITY BANKERS ASSOCIATION

A SALES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: Improving Sales and Building Better Customer Relationships

Paul A. Melton



Everyday, your bank's good customers receive numerous offers for financial services from a whole host of financial providers, whether through the mail, telemarketing, the internet or face-to-face contact. Is your bank doing all it can to stay competitive in this business environment? Certainly in the sales process, the more we

know about our customers and the products they need, the better—the better we are able to serve them, the more trust we establish with them, the more likely they are to continue to turn to us for future services and products. But, we cannot only rely on customers to come to us, we must be more proactive in winning new business, through effective prospecting and understanding customer needs. If we are not addressing this kind of sales activity daily, we are falling behind and losing valuable time. The challenge, therefore, is to train and motivate our employees to establish and foster mutually beneficial relationships with customers, and then to arm our managers with information to implement and evaluate sales strategies. One of the most effective ways to achieve this goal is to integrate all sales efforts under one umbrella.

"The best sales organizations will be the survivors in the increasingly competitive financial services industry. Therefore, no institution can afford not to use the best and most effective technology and sales tools available. The SMARTS program is one of those tools. It utilizes cutting edge technology applied in a most efficient manner to maximize the effectiveness of a financial institution's sales activities throughout the organization."

Dr. William F. Staats
Graduate School of Banking
Louisiana State University

BUILDING BETTER CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS

One of the best ways to evaluate your bank's sales potential is by identifying the needs of current and prospective customers. How is this best accomplished? Imagine, if your bank's front-line employees were highly motivated and trained to "ask the right questions" to identify some of the needs of customers and potential customers. Then imagine employees that effortlessly update referral and customer information in a single database, potentially match the customer with an appropriate bank product or service, and then track subsequent contact with the customer, including interdepartmental referrals, appointment scheduling, follow-ups, and sales results. With SMARTS, you don't have to imagine. It's all at your fingertips.

"No bank, anywhere, regardless of size or location, has a more comprehensive sales data management system than the SMARTS sales system."

Bank Marketing Consultant

The SMARTS system regards strengthening customer relationships and sales success as one entity. SMARTS is not designed to implement stringent sales strategies that chase away valuable employees or alienate customers by attempting to sell them a product they don't need. Instead, its user-friendly technology helps create an organized sales process that makes your company's sales efforts and management much easier. That alone, translates into more meaningful and productive interactions with customers, resulting in both stronger customer relationships and bigger profits.

"The product sales effort at the Bank of West Baton Rouge was typical of a community bank. The Bank had a willing sales force that was operating in a sales maze. SMARTS enabled the Bank to organize the sales function, measure results, and reward performance. The Bank's investment will be repaid many times over."

Don Ayres, President
Bank of West Baton Rouge
Port Allen, LA

SMARTS is a comprehensive sales system for community financial institutions. Its proven methods benefit banks by guiding and managing a total sales effort from start to finish. First, it increases profitability by totally integrating all sales activities, provides management with real-time data that tracks referrals and sales, thus evaluating sales strategies instantaneously. Second, SMARTS provides comprehensive and customized sales training helps that establish and reinforce a successful, more profitable "sales culture" and customer relations philosophy.

GIVE EMPLOYEES WHAT THEY NEED: TRAINING, EVALUATION AND MOTIVATION

A bank's greatest asset is its employees. The SMARTS program teaches employees how to build better customer relationships and earn new business for your bank. Then, SMARTS puts the tools they need to be successful right in their hands. With initial on-site training and user-friendly software featuring more than 50 simple, comprehensive employee and officer sales training modules, employees have direct access to training exercises from the convenience of their work location.

“The motivation that “SMARTS” provides is unbelievable. It allows all employees to see the rewards that come from prospecting.”

Jennifer Sexton, Sales Coordinator
First Financial Bank
El Dorado, AR

The SMARTS training teaches your employees how to identify customers and non-customers that are prospects, and then teaches them how to ask “the right questions” and really listen to customer responses to discover customer needs. SMARTS helps them to be proactive and more confident in their contact with customers, in everything from learning whether customers have a need for products or services your bank offers, to setting up customer appointments with sales officers, or even asking for referrals. SMARTS increases employees’ knowledge on how to form good customer relations, and the better the sales skills your employees have, the better the value of the customer relationships they will develop.

“The “SMARTS” System provides positive feedback to our employees. It does a great job of documenting the success of our sales efforts.”

Rodney Landes, President
First Financial Bank
El Dorado, AR

Because SMARTS tracks all sales activity, beginning with initial employee referral or customer contact, it serves as a valuable tool for motivating employees, and builds a pipeline for referrals complete with appointment calendar and reminder screens. Furthermore, because the SMARTS system is designed to custom fit the needs of your financial institution, it can implement the management of referral and sales incentive programs that reflect your bank’s philosophy with respect to customer relationship management. Your bank can establish employee goals, recognition, and rewards based on your sales plans. Employee incentives can be developed which reflect the performance of new referrals, sales, and sales dollars. Your employees’ sales performance improves as you track their sales activities and results. Plus, ongoing training teaches senior managers how to monitor and evaluate performance progress and sales results for individual employees, branches, and departments.

“Most everyone understands that success in today’s banking environment requires a strong business development and product sales culture. Historically, the reporting, tracking, and measuring of sales results have always been an arduous process, at best. SMARTS provides the most effective vehicle of communicating referrals and tracking sales that I have seen. SMARTS provides management and employees with constant, current activity, measures results and improves bank-wide awareness of business development efforts. Because of the simple, user friendly concept of transmitting information, our employees are now able to focus on promoting State Bank & Trust Co. and our products.”

H. Owen Carty, President
State Bank & Trust Co
Brookhaven, MS

IMPROVE SALES WITH TRACKING TECHNOLOGY

Right now most banks do not have an organized sales process for managing their sales opportunities, and customer relations information. However, in order to stay competitive, profitable banks must have easy access to this kind of information and they must be able to use it to evaluate and manage sales strategies and how they are influencing sales performance. These days, many banks find they must rely on insufficient customer information that employees often find too labor-intensive to keep updated enough to be truly useful.

SMARTS is simple to use. Easy-to-read computer screens make data entry and evaluation simple, allowing your bank to convert a paper environment to a paperless environment. Just as SMARTS training can be tailored to fit your bank’s needs, so can its reporting, which provides adaptable system options, designed to fit your bank’s strategies, products, organizational requirements, and specifications.

“If an organization and its employee’s do not know what they’ve sold or what they should be selling, they’re in sales never-never land! SMARTS is a sales roadmap. SMARTS enables employees and management to track sales activity and serves as a scorecard for financial incentives for employees. It is an effective sales management tool because it heightens the awareness of all employees on the value of selling bank products while enabling employees to track their successes on a daily basis.”

Don Ayres, President
Bank of West Baton Rouge
Port Allen, LA

SMARTS provides more than eighty custom reports and thirty “read-at-a-glance” graphs that track and evaluate referral and sales efforts, breaking it down by employees, sales teams, branches, and products—all in real-time. SMARTS reports chart everything from sales referrals, appointment scheduling, follow-up contact, and earned employee credits to closing ratios and comparative reports such as prior month and quarter. Your product sales mix and sources-of-funds are also illustrated graphically. These simple, comprehensive reports aid in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of your bank’s employee training and productivity, and your bank’s overall sales and customer relations strategies.

“SMARTS allows us to focus on selling and referring instead of bookkeeping. The reports show us the areas that need attention. We can then tailor our training to the people, job classification or branch that needs help.”

Dan Donald, President
Jeff Davis Bank
Jennings, LA

TODAY'S CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY BANKS

Community banks face increasingly stiff competition in today's market. In order to succeed, they must be adept at identifying areas of their organization that are not performing and make more timely changes to make them profitable. To do this they must have access to continually updated information that tracks sales instantaneously and they must train managers to use this data to heighten the bank's sales results.

"After looking at several alternatives, we found that SMARTS represented the best sales management solution for our retail operation. Its referral and sales tracking capabilities, combined with its flexible reporting and incentive compensation features, have made it an excellent choice. SMARTS has been critical in our efforts to develop and reinforce our sales and service culture here at Community Trust."

Danny Van, City President
Community Trust Bank
Monroe, LA

SMARTS "total sales management" capabilities help banks make the most of the resources available to them, providing your bank with the direction, training, tracking, and reporting that maximize both the technological and human resources you already have at your disposal. SMARTS cuts out wasted paper and labor-intensive tracking and reporting and provides employees with an easy to use, reliable, incentive-based referral system, custom designed to sell your bank's products, and grow your business.

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