

## ***Forewarning: A Bank's Best Assets Are Trained Tellers***

By Dr. Linda Eagle

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Tellers are the frontline representatives and the “face” of your Bank to anyone who walks through your institution’s doors. These personnel are the first to meet customers, service their banking needs, and offer their suggestions on better products. Working directly with the customers, tellers are the key to building comfortable relationships that create and maintain a strong client base. Due to their role and position at Banks, tellers reign as the most important member of any banking institution.

However, in order to be effective as frontline personnel, tellers need to be motivated and capable of consistently exhibiting a positive “can do” attitude toward understanding and exceeding customer expectations. To achieve this goal, tellers need to have a clear understanding of your bank’s infrastructure, systems, internal procedures and new products.

Tellers also need to know how to keep a client, listen actively, complete a timely transaction, resolve problems, and look and act professionally at all times.

In order for tellers to be effective at sales and service, it is the responsibility of the bank to properly recruit, prepare, continuously improve, and compensate tellers. It is also important for supervisors to encourage tellers, just as we do in any other banking business area, and on any other banking level.

Untrained tellers can:

- *Frustrate customers*
- *Make the bank vulnerable to regulatory compliance and legal exposure*
- *Incorrectly complete transactions and short bank money and fees*
- *Perform poorly, exhibit low morale and ruin a bank’s reputation*

To avoid the negatives of untrained personnel, a bank’s basic teller training should include:

- *On the job training*
- *Instructor-led classroom*
- *Distance learning*
- *Combination strategies*

In addition, the full treatment would include:

- *Ongoing staff development*
- *Frontline supervisory strategies*

Choosing the basics of teller training delivery needs to reflect your bank's culture, capability, and budget.

On the job training:

- *Pro:*
  - *Is inexpensive to administer. No need take trainers/trainees off of the job.*
  - *Does not require the investment of a training program and trainers to administer the program*
  - *Training is performed in a "live environment" within the branch that they will be asked to perform*
  - *Offers lead tellers an opportunity to train*
  
- *Con:*
  - *Creates an inconsistent training program*
  - *Less opportunity to learn beyond the tasks and events that they have experienced while they were training*
  - *Less time for why to do something, only how to do a task*
  - *Less means to measure participant's retention of the trained concepts*
  - *Trainee error can result in a real customer problem*
  - *Decreased productivity of both teller that is being trained and the teller who is administering the training*
  
- **Instructor-led classroom**
  - *Pro:*
    - *More consistent training program*
    - *Trained knowledge can be monitored through observation and testing*
    - *Training occurs in a controlled and "safe" setting where the customer will not see errors by the training participant*
    - *Responses to specific questions are available more readily*
  
  - *Con:*
    - *Costs associated with a training program materials*
    - *Requires training staff and simulated environment to administer the training program*
    - *Training classes and training schedules apply and must mix with new hire tellers*
    - *You will need "critical mass" of a sufficient class size to conduct a training class*
    - *Teller training classes will need to be scheduled around other training programs that the department delivers*
    - *Teller participants must adhere to the learning schedule and pace of the class*
    - *Classroom environments are not real-world*
  
- **Distance learning**
  - *Pro:*
    - *More consistent training program*
    - *Knowledge can be monitored through testing*
    - *Testing results can be monitored and reported quickly and accurately*
    - *Training to occur in a controlled and "safe" setting*
    - *Teller training is completely flexible to the teller hiring schedule*
    - *No need to reach a "critical mass" in size to conduct a training class.*
    - *Training classes can be as small as a "class of one"*
  
  - *Con:*
    - *Cost associated with the investment of a training program*

- *Requires the infrastructure to deliver the distance learning strategy*
- *Pure distance learning limits practical “hands on” experiences of teller transactions*
- *Less ability for participant to question and obtain enhanced learning of subjects*
- Blend learning strategy of OJT, Classroom, & Distance Learning:
  - *Pro:*
    - *More consistent training program*
    - *Trained knowledge can be monitored through testing*
    - *Testing results can be monitored and reported quickly and accurately*
    - *Allows training to occur in a controlled and “safe” setting where the customer will not see errors by the training participant*
    - *Allows the training schedule to be completely flexible to the teller hiring schedule*
    - *Participant can obtain responses to specific questions*
    - *A portion of the training can be performed in a “live environment” within the branch that they will be asked to perform*
  - *Con:*
    - *Costs connected to the investment of a training program*
    - *Requires the infrastructure to deliver the distance learning strategy*
    - *Requires the investment in a training staff and simulated environment to administer the training program*
    - *Critical mass problem of class size still exists, but is limited to only a portion of the training experience*

Whichever basic teller training solution is chosen, a full-circle teller-training program needs to be:

- *Inclusive for all personnel*
- *Motivational for the staff and management*
- *Adaptable to your products, culture, and needs*
- *Cost effective to administer*
- *Delivered in a consistent, measurable, and engaging manner*

Last but not least, there are several finishing factors that fix the outcome of well-rounded and successful teller training initiatives:

Whether you are a large or small banking institution, you need to underscore teller training by reinforcing its value across new hire training events, supervisory support and ongoing development. Without these final touches and consistent commentary, tellers will succumb to the stress of everyday situations that test their patience and skills and cause them to look elsewhere for entry-level pay. Be prepared by reviewing your bank's approach to teller training - you are forewarned.



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