

The New Face of Banking: The Well-Trained Teller

by Dr. Linda Eagle

Why invest in Teller Training? Two very powerful reasons: the competition of online banking and compliance risk.

Branch Banks are Key to Future Growth

The financial success of any banking institution is inextricably tied to the success of its branches. Across the industry, branches are currently facing two main dilemmas: how to keep customers and sell to new ones; and, managing regulatory compliance. If these issues are not handled properly, the branch is history. How do you prevent becoming a statistic? By providing solid training and support to ensure that your teller and platform staff are at the top of their game.

Not The Same Old Bank Customer Anymore

Customer retention and new sales are more difficult because of an increasingly savvy customer base. These folks aren't afraid to shop rates and compare products. There's less loyalty to one bank over another. For your customer, the ease of online banking calls into question the necessity of making a stop in their neighborhood branch. A time-pressured customer needs to have a reason to get in their car and drive to your bank, rather than sitting at their home computer and logging onto an online banking service. Suddenly "value-added service" has a renewed purpose, as customers begin to question the value of opening an account in their local branch and paying the service fees, when they can get the same products and rates online, for minimal fees. Your tellers and platform staff are your inducement. Customers are more likely to stay with a brick and mortar bank if they feel the bank staff knows and cares about them; if they feel secure in the knowledge that their money is being managed by someone they know. Paying the fees for these services is more palatable if your customer feels the benefit.

A way to reinforce those benefits to your customers is by providing them with a well trained, experienced, and knowledgeable professional teller staff. Replace the anonymity of online banking with the familiar, friendly face of your tellers. A strong teller presence contributes to customer retention, thereby increasing sales opportunities that result in bank growth and profitability.

The New Reality, The New Face

It's noted that historically the role of teller has not been viewed as a "professional" position. The candidate pool has typically been pulled from a narrow demographic: young, high school graduate, with limited business experience. Couple this with traditionally low pay and a high turnover rate, and your training and retention efforts begin to suffer. Creating a knowledgeable and experienced teller workforce is difficult to do when your bank has a revolving door of talent, and a limited staffing budget. You're left with a hiring and training challenge that must be overcome if your bank is to stay competitive.

The new reality is that today's teller is the backbone of retail banking success. Part of encouraging bank growth is to acknowledge that tellers must have a front line commitment to a sales culture, as well as be credible and product-savvy. They must

balance being good customer service providers — warm, friendly, engaging — with the ability to know their customers well enough to recognize a sales opportunity. Consider that the ROI for acquiring a *new* customer is 2.5%, while the ROI of retaining and reselling an *existing* customer is 12.5%!

Unsurprisingly, teller training needs to grow with the changing face of banking. Instead of simply teaching tellers how to process transactions and count money — training should also teach sales techniques. Focus your tellers' attention on customer retention by teaching them how to identify opportunities that keep your current customers with your bank through other instruments. Case in point: a checking account holder should also be seen as a potential car loan or home mortgage customer. A new parent – someone interested in establishing investment vehicles for college tuition. A small business owner – an opportunity to promote business loans or 401k vehicles.

Why Chance Regulatory Risks?

You only have to look as far as recent news stories to see that regulatory compliance is in the limelight, with the risks to banks higher than ever before. There are more regulations, and they are more complex in nature. With fines and penalties at an all time high, the importance of a well-trained and well-educated staff is crystal clear. Tellers are your first line of defense on compliance and security. They are often charged with the serious responsibility of explaining and conforming to the myriad of banking regulations and compliance issues. A teller staff that is not current on bank compliance regulations represents the difference between a spotless compliance record, and getting slapped with a non-compliance fine.

In these days after 9/11 — preserving bank security measures by assessing customers in accordance to BSA and the USA Patriot Act is paramount. Are you confident your teller staff is up to the task? Why put your bank at risk? Decrease the opportunity for compliance and security liability by ensuring your teller staff has easy access to up-to-date regulations and policies.

Online Training is Your Solution

Creating both a sales-oriented *and* compliance-focused teller staff may seem like a daunting task, but it's attainable if you take advantage of the available technology. Affordable and cost-effective, online teller training provides consistent, professional training to your tellers, while also functioning as an always-accessible regulatory reference. Imagine the cost- and time-savings between utilizing the corporate trainer, branch manager or supervisor's time to work hands-on with a new employee *vs.* online training. Installing an easy to understand, educational yet engaging online training program that's geared to teach and reinforce complicated bank policies, procedures and regulations is a win-win solution.

The Final Word

Online teller training is a solution that contributes both to improving your customer retention and new sales, and reducing your exposure to compliance liability, while maximizing the talents of your most valuable commodity — your teller staff: the new face of banking.

Dr. Linda Eagle is Founder & President of The Edcomm Group Banker's Academy—a 21-year-old education and consulting firm dedicated to serving Banks, Credit Unions, Money Services Businesses and all areas of the Global Financial Community with thousands of generic and customized training programs in areas such as BSA/AML, Regulatory Compliance, Teller Training, Systems Training, Sales and Service Training, and many more.

[Edcomm Banker's Academy](#) is headquartered in New York, NY. For more information, email linda.eagle@edcomm.com or call 888.433.2666/+1.212.631.9400.