

THE BEST RESPONSE

by [Steve Brown](#)

We have a precept here at BIG/PCBB that no employee should complain without offering a reasonable solution for improvement. That is why (and rightly so) some clients were critical of our assessment of how banks handled a recent website mystery shopping exercise that we conducted during the 1Q. As previously reported, most banks failed to score a passing grade - either because they ignored our initial inquiry to open a business account or gave an inadequate response. Since bankers felt that we should offer a solution to our criticism, we went to work. After surveying those banks that garnered the highest scores, we created our own e-mail response and had a 7 member focus group rate each submission. Based on this research and input, we have created a short, concise automatic e-mail response that should put web inquiry users immediately at ease. This response comes from a personalized e-mail address, assigns a tracking number in order to monitor quality assurance, sets expectations, gives a time of expected response, provides a follow-up number in case satisfaction is not achieved and includes a cross-selling promotion designed as an "Inquiry Thank You." The net result of this response should be to not only stem rising customer frustration to an inquiry or potential problem, but to showcase superior customer service. The document takes response one step further and turns superior customer service into a selling opportunity - something that is not done enough at banks. If you would like a copy of this well-tested and high scoring response form, send us an e-mail and we will send you one for your royalty-free use or edification.

HIGH PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP

We have another workshop coming up in New Orleans on June 7th. For those that wonder if the 1-day workshop is worth their time, consider the fact that part of the day's focus will be in how to design profitable business and retail packages of services. For those that attend, we will be providing sample product bundles for banks with specific orientations (rural, retail, business, high net worth, etc.). The sample will include pricing ranges for services offered by competing banks and will help your institution determine the proper pricing, tiering and service features in order to better compete. This research took more than 50 hours of time and effort to collect, so attendees will undoubtedly find value in the data. Keep in mind that this is just one of many points of value at these workshops. We have room for 11 more bankers, so contact us for a brochure or to sign up.

BANK NEWS

M&A

New Hampshire Thrift Bancshares (\$782.2mm, NH) will acquire First Community Bank (\$83.4mm, VT) for \$15.5mm or about 1.95x book.

M&A

Summit Financial Group (\$1.2B, VA) will acquire Greater Atlantic Financial (\$287mm, VA) for \$13.9mm or 1.73x book. Greater Atlantic Financial has lost money 5 of the last 6 years.

Competition

Main Street Bank (\$120mm, TX) over the last 2.5 years has focused on equipment financing for small businesses across the country such as health clubs and restaurants. This approach has increased the

bank's assets by almost 400%. This is another example of how finding a niche can really boost business.

Foreclosure Help

The National Community Reinvestment Coalition is asking lawmakers to start a national fund that would give money to help low income borrowers that are having trouble paying their mortgages. This comes as subprime foreclosures are expected to keep rising.

Oddly Optimistic

A recent study from Grant Thornton, found that executives were 2x as likely to believe that their own business' financial outlook was better than the overall economic outlook.

Competition

Union Bank of California (\$52.6B, CA) has begun using a web-based wholesale lockbox that lets customers see payment documents within a few hours of receipt. Quick access to historical information is also provided.

The Future

Mutual fund companies report that as much as 80% of interactions with clients now occur online – yet another reason banks should consider upgrading online delivery systems.

Copyright 2021 PCBB. Information contained herein is based on sources we believe to be reliable, but its accuracy is not guaranteed. Customers should rely on their own outside counsel or accounting firm to address specific circumstances. This document cannot be reproduced or redistributed outside of your institution without the written consent of PCBB.