
A Story About How to Distinguish Your Bank

by [Steve Brown](#)

Back in the old days, if someone wrote a book, they mailed it off in a big envelope to publishers. The author then waited for either a rejection letter or, if they were extraordinarily lucky, the book would be published and marketed through the distribution channels of the publisher. This process still exists but success in this manner is almost impossible for an unknown author.

There is an Amazon tool for publishing for independent writers called CreateSpace and one of our loyal BID readers used it to successfully publish a kid's book. The book is entitled "The Awesome Adventures of Pickle Boy" and it was recently at the top of both the Superhero and Science Fiction categories for Children's eBooks on Amazon. We did a quick check on Amazon and found 759 kids' eBooks on superheroes and 5,961 for science fiction. OK, we are impressed.

Curious about how to leverage this discussion for community bankers, we asked our friend how he distinguished his work from all the others. He indicated that once he had published his book, he networked with friends and developed social media contacts through Facebook. The real game changer, though, came when an article showed up in a news blog that had a following of consumers of books that are a good fit with this author's style and content. After the blog came a number of positive reviews, and from there, things really popped. So, can a community banker use this example to their advantage and become the focus of potential customers? We definitely think so.

First, consider that different books have different story lines and characters just like different banks do. At first glance, one could say that banking is much harder because most banking products are pretty indistinguishable; but that is too simple. Every bank has a story to tell because otherwise it wouldn't exist. Knowing what is most important about your bank's identity is important for success, but telling your story is crucial to your success. Does your bank specialize in the needs of certain business borrowers? Has your bank been in the community since 1910? Are the characters in your bank the most important point? Are your officers important in the community or do they have a special expertise? Do your marketing efforts tell your story and do they do so where your customers come to read about it?

It's important to tell your own story well, but it's even more effective to have your story reinforced by someone else. Look on any big bank web site and you are bound to find a reference to their exceptional service with the happy face of a customer saying so. Anyone can say they provide great service, but without the customer to reinforce it, readers often will not believe it is true. We all want to relate, so find a customer to help you communicate your message to gain more traction. Customer testimonials in advertisements can be very effective if your market is small enough for people to know one another, but even in bigger markets they help people relate. Also try professional references to highlight your bank's expertise, especially if your bank has a specific business niche.

Finally, don't forget to go see your good customers. Check in with them to ensure they are satisfied and find out what else your bank can be doing for them. When you do, don't forget to ask if they know someone else you could contact that might need similar services. These ideas are gentle reminders that you must continually position your bank to be relevant and present in the minds of potential customers (as well as your existing ones) to succeed. Telling your story and that of your

happy customer's is a good way to build relationships that last as you distinguish your bank from the rest of the competition.

BANK NEWS

Threats

A Forbes Insights study of 300 major companies worldwide finds the top technology threats are social media (47%), data mining/analytics (44%), mobile (40%) cloud (38%) and cyber attacks (36%). The result is that 91% of these companies have changed their business strategies to adapt.

Legal Risk

Goldman said inquiries by US regulators about mortgage bonds it packaged and sold prior to the crisis could lead it to significantly increase its legal set asides to another \$4.0B above the \$3.5B it already has set aside.

Economy

Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan said he expects the Fed will keep its bond buying program in place and sees the economy growing at 2.5% in 2014.

Vendor Risk

A TD Bank survey of 150 middle market and corporate finance executives finds 44% of executives say they are strengthening their evaluation of risk management methods used by their vendors and suppliers. Notably, 40% said they had terminated business relationships where the vendor was carrying too much risk.

Mortgage Delinquency

The mortgage delinquency rate (60 days+) fell 23% in the past year to 4.09% at the end of 3Q.

Marketing

Beyond social media, marketing professionals in a SocialMedia survey said they used the following channels: email (87%); search engine optimization (64%); event marketing (59%); press releases (55%); direct mail (39%); online ads (38%); print display ads (34%); sponsorships (26%); mobile marketing (19%); webinars (18%); radio ads (16%) and television ads (11%).

Small Biz

The SBA reports small business borrowing is about \$1.2T overall, with banks providing about 53% of loans, finance companies providing 37% and other lenders at around 10%.

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