

 

## BOARD ISSUES : RETAIL

# Five Tips to Sell Better in Your Branches

BY DAVE DEFAZIO | NOVEMBER 10TH, 2011

Does this sound familiar? Your bank is launching a new product or sales technique that's going to be a surefire hit with your customers. You're expecting big results in growing customer relationships. But, the results don't meet expectations. The new ideas fail to infect your branch teams with your enthusiasm. In my experience, lackluster training is usually the culprit. But even the best instructional content is not guaranteed to produce great results. Don't take chances with the success of your retail initiatives. Follow these five ideas to add new life to your branch sales performance.

### 1. Create the Right Environment

First of all, don't call it, sales training. Branch employees hate the "S" word. Instead, focus on customer service training. Your front line will be more open to your ideas and their emotional buy-in can be the difference between success and failure.

If you want your branch teams to care, then you have to show them that you care, too. Have senior managers kick off the training sessions—let them hear the critical messages directly from you and your senior management team. Share your passion with them. Tell them why the training is important and what success can mean for the bank and its customers.

Let's face it—bank sales training can be boring. Just a few details can add a little pizzazz to your sessions and leave a lasting impression on your branch teams. Blast some upbeat music for arriving students. Provide some goofy training gifts (see me after class for your "I know the Secret of the Bank Secrecy Act" T-shirt).

### 2. Market Your Training to the Front Line

Involve your marketing team in your training initiatives. Give them a budget. Set goals for how the training should be communicated to targeted employees. Create an internal email campaign or a fun video at the beginning of each training session to solicit buy-in from your retail team.

### 3. Practice, Not Role Plays

There's no better way to be a better seller than to learn new sales techniques by role playing. However, just saying the words, "role play" will incite panic attacks in most retail bankers. Don't single out participants for role playing exercises in front of their peers. It freaks them out. Instead, pair off the participants and let them practice with each other without the pressure to perform in front of the whole class.

### 4. Target and Reinforce Simple Training Behaviors

Even great trainers are lucky if participants remember 20 percent of what they hear in a training class. Make the target skills easy to remember. At our company, we use memorable phrases like: "Remember the 1-2-3." Reduce key ideas down to something as easy as 1-2-3. You'll have a better chance of connecting with your trainees.

Don't train new sales behaviors and then hope for the best. A wise sales manager once told me: "There are only two ways to get people to adopt new behaviors pleasure or pain." Without pleasure or pain, people usually just revert back to the same comfortable behaviors as usual. So, focus on the key activities and behaviors that you want to change, and then reinforce these behaviors with things that make people feel good. Include lots of public recognition for top performers. How about a sales contest to reward the new sales behaviors? Or announce a spot incentive to put the focus on a new goal.

## **5. Don't Forget the Branch Managers**

Too often, sales training focuses just on sales behaviors. But managing new behaviors is equally hard. Help your branch managers develop a "fast start plan" to guarantee a successful implementation of new sales skills in their branch. Brainstorm a list of easy five minute sales meeting huddles. Be sure to plan fun reward and recognition activities that sustain the enthusiasm of your front line. Over the years, I've grabbed dozens of inexpensive ideas from the book, "1001 Ways to Reward Employees," by Bob Nelson. Every person in a leadership position should have a copy of this book.

Execution is always the difference. We'd love to hear about things that your team has done to take your training events to the next level.

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