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## **“How to Increase Sales without Increasing Your Effort”**

by Deanna Turner

“How can I get the tellers to sell more?” is a common question I hear from bank personnel. In a slower economy and increasingly competitive market retaining customers, increasing referrals and maximizing sales becomes even more critical to ensuring strong profits. So why is that easier said than done?

**1) It’s not my job.** “I don’t have time, I don’t know how, I was hired to be in customer service not sales” are common barriers heard from tellers and other employees who are resistant to sales. Often these misconceptions and fears are caused from a lack of knowledge. It is critical to train employees to use specific skills to generate more referrals and to up sell. To ensure success, be certain that supervisors are coaching the continued use of the skills and modeling the usage as well! Remember to measure your progress. There is a direct correlation between the degree to which employees pay attention to an initiative, and how much importance is placed on measuring it.

**2) Tag ons.** Many branches and call centers use “tag ons” at the end of every transaction. A “tag on” is a brief question intended to see if a customer is a prospect for a product or service. For example, “*Mrs. Bambrick, since it’s tax time, are you interested in opening an IRA?*” Each employee memorizes five to ten questions that are rotated every month to reflect product changes, time of year, current promotions, etc. This is quick and simple to implement. A sales opportunity can easily be offered to 100% of customer contacts. It’s also easy to measure and mystery shop. One caution, employees should be coached about their tone of voice. Misused these tag ons could inadvertently sound scripted or pushy.

**3) People like to buy...but they don’t like to be sold!** Here’s a similar strategy. It takes a bit longer to execute, but is more customer focused. You can make a smooth transition from the transaction to a referral or sales conversation by remembering “hint, help, have time”. By listening carefully a teller can refer to a “hint” or clue heard from the customer, which personalizes the transition. Next, they mention how they have some ideas that may “help” the customer. In order to avoid sounding pushy, products are intentionally not mentioned. Finally asking if the customer “has time” gets their permission to move into a sales conversation while at the same time demonstrating respect and professionalism. For example: “*Mr. MacDonald, earlier you mentioned*

*your kitchen remodel. I have some good ideas on how we could help you out with that. Do you have a couple of minutes to speak with our customer service manager?"*

**4) If they don't buy it from you...they'll buy it from somebody else.** Sales is just an extension of good service. Banks are doing a disservice to their customers when they don't consistently offer products and services to help them. A big challenge is getting busy employees to consistently ask for the business! ***The answer will always be "no"...if you don't ask!*** One innovative wireless company implemented a program called "*Just Ask*". In an extremely competitive market and with rates higher than the competition, they were able to increase customers' rate plans by an average of 15% by proactively "asking" before contracts expired. This shows how even the most difficult situations can provide the best opportunities for additional sales. An overdrawn account is a perfect opportunity to sell overdraft protection, or apply for a credit card to secure it. A small business owner hitting a card limit for capital purchases, opens the door to sell a line of credit, home equity loan, or increased card limit.

Everyone in the bank should be selling, as an extension of good service. After all, front line employees are in the very best position to make good referrals, and to "up sell" to increase profits and customer satisfaction for the bank.

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