

THE ART OF POSITIONING

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BRANCH PRODUCT RESEARCH BRAND

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The Universal Banker: Getting the Most From a New Staff Role

As alternate channels and payment mechanisms such as ATMs, debit cards, online banking and direct deposit have continued to mature, the industry has seen a corresponding decrease in teller transactions. This trend, in concert with a heightened emphasis on non-interest expense management, has led many institutions to consider adding a universal banker role to their branch staffing options.

The universal banker, also referred to as a universal agent, is a cross-trained employee capable of performing both teller and customer service representative tasks. This multi-functional employee can reduce total staff needs by filling either branch role in markets where an additional full time employee in either role is not warranted. In the simplest definition of the role, the cross-trained universal banker is available to cover employee absences or lunch breaks at either a teller or CSR position. The universal banker may also be scheduled for one position or the other during periods of heightened demand; for example, the teller role on a Friday afternoon.

But to maximize the benefit of the universal banker role, institutions must support the employee

with design, technology and training that facilitate the employee's quick and efficient migration from one role to another on an as-needed basis. A cross-trained employee scheduled for the platform desk from 8:00 to noon and for the teller line from 1:00 to 5:00 is better from an expense control standpoint than two half-utilized employees who are present all day. But this configuration fails to leverage the full potential of the universal banker role.

Optimally, the universal banker should serve as maitre'd, transaction processor, service provider and financial counselor all in one. The agent's role should be one of triage, intercepting customers and guiding them to the proper destination for the appropriate resolution of their needs. If a customer needs a check cashed, the banker escorts him to the teller line; if the customer needs a CD renewed, the banker escorts her to a platform workstation; if the customer brings a sophisticated loan need, the banker may begin the application process and call in the branch manager for consultation.

A universal banker can not fully perform the triage function that maximizes sales and service effectiveness while minimizing total staff costs unless supported by

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Have You Ever Seen a Tweet?

In the last issue of *Bancology* (March 2009), I wrote about the importance of succinctly distilling your communication messages down to a series of *brand bytes*. As consumers, we have been trained and cajoled into consuming information in a constant stream of bits and pieces that, if crafted carefully, should collectively add up to a brand story. These *brand bytes* are delivered via headlines, billboards, banner ads, posters, Facebook status updates, text messages... and now, Twitter.

You'd have to be in complete media exile not to have been exposed to this social phenomenon in some way. Oprah, Aston Kutcher, the Hudson River landing photo, President Obama and the tweeting jurist are just a few of the personalities or incidents that are rocketing Twitter and tweeting (the act of posting updates on Twitter) into the stratosphere. It seems you can't read any newspaper, spend time on any news web site or watch your local news without some reference to Twitter. My local television stations are all imploring viewers to follow anchors, reporters, weather and sports on a variety of Twitter accounts.

Twitter has not gone unnoticed by the financial services community. Of all of the groups and people that I follow, I would have to say that financial services

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Want to read Bancology online?

Just as some customers prefer in-person banking while others prefer ATMs, we understand that some bankers favor the online channel. So, if you'd rather read Bancology online, drop a note to info@bancography.com and we'll send you a link each quarter instead of a hard copy. For those who prefer to turn pages, save back-issues and pass along articles, we traditionalists appreciate your sentiments, and we'll continue to send a copy by mail. Thanks to all for your loyal reading each quarter.

Getting the Most From a New Staff Role *continued from page one*

two critical changes in branch configuration. First, the teller line must be redesigned to allow an employee to easily migrate from a paying and receiving workstation to a sales and service workstation. By splitting the teller line or opening it at either end, the redesigned branch allows employees to circulate throughout the branch, rather than being constrained to one workstation. The open teller line can even support individual teller stations at each sales desk, so every customer receives a sit-down interaction with a banker for all activities. This approach is gaining popularity among institutions targeting affluent market segments.

Secondly, the split teller line must utilize teller cash recyclers (TCRs). TCRs accept, store and dispense currency and coin in a closed environment similar to an ATM. As such, the TCR offers a secure alternative to the traditional teller cash drawer, which the banker could not leave without closing, reconciling and locking. Because the TCR represents a closed

system, the banker can migrate from the teller workstation whenever needed with no risk to the cash stored within.

Finally, the implementation of a true universal banker role requires training. The teller and CSR skill sets differ, and cross training in the processing tasks of each role is just a starting point. Operationally minded tellers may require role playing and needs-assessment classes to develop sales skills, and all universal bankers will need training to master the triage process of greeting guests, deducing needs and determining the proper venue for fulfillment. Institutions operating in-store branches will recognize the universal agent concept, as the in-store model has long used "jack of all trades" employees. Many of the in-store training programs should be portable to the universal banker training, too.

By allowing one employee to fill multiple roles, a universal banker program can begin to reduce branch staff costs. But when properly supported, it can yield an improved sales and service environment, while keeping transaction processing costs to a minimum.

Have You Ever Seen a Tweet? *continued from page one*

providers are embracing Twitter more than most other business categories. Why? Many reasons abound, and if I were to explore them in this article, I would just be repeating ad nauseam what researchers and journalists are tripping over themselves to report. Two of the best sources of information regarding financial services participation in Twitter are the **ABA Banking Journal electronic poll** and the **William Mills Agency study** entitled "**The Bank and Credit Union Twittersphere.**" You can find both by searching online, and I encourage you to read them.

I'm not going to tell you how to twitter, when to tweet, what to tweet, the frequency of your tweets, whether you should tweet as a brand or an individual, who should tweet (the president, the CMO or the marketing intern) or how to monitor and respond to tweets about your brand. I have a solid point-of-view on all of these aspects and would be happy to engage in an individual dialogue with you, if you desire.

Instead, what I want to do is expose you to some actual tweets. Despite Twitter's soaring popularity, there's a good chance you haven't seen a tweet. Now is your chance to be up to speed on the conversations that are actually taking place. I joined Twitter to find out how it works, how to use it for

Bancography's marketing efforts and how to use it for our clients' marketing. You should sign up, too.

As of this writing, I follow more than 50 banks and more than 150 credit unions on Twitter (for many reasons credit unions are embracing Twitter at a faster rate than banks). I frequently search for new financial services tweets and am confident that I capture most of them. The individual tweets run the gamut from promoting rates to personal commentary. The William Mills study referenced earlier categorizes tweets into six types which, if you're interested, you can review.

The following 20 actual tweets are all great examples of how to use this medium. Some are more promotional than others. That's OK. You need to find a balance with your messages. Institution names, if not obvious, are italicized at the end of each tweet.

@TSCU: Good morning peeps! We are currently brainstorming on how we can implement a "green account" package here at TSCU, any suggestions? (*Tempe Schools CU*)

@Fidelity_Bank: Small change adds up! Learn more about Smart Cents Savings from Fidelity!

@ProvidentCU: Tomorrow at 10:30 AM: Free Seminar (Identity Theft) at our Walnut Creek Branch. Reservations: <http://bit.ly/jHp17>

An Idea Worth Looking Into

Those who have read *Bancology* over the years know that it's rare that we tout a specific vendor's offerings. Bancography remains steadfastly vendor-neutral, so that we can recommend the best options for our clients' needs in any situation. However, when we see an innovative idea, we're eager to share.

Our colleagues at Romary Associates recently introduced a completely mobile branch. The cleverly named **Bankroll** is a full-service branch set into a truck that can be driven to any destination. By using the latest security and communications technologies, the **Bankroll** provides almost all of the capabilities of a traditional fixed-location building, including complete teller and platform functionality. It has numerous applications, including serving as a disaster recovery facility or as a temporary facility that can be parked

at a construction site where a traditional branch is being built.

But our favorite application is for markets too small to support even the smallest traditional, in-line or in-store branches. We have previously explored the difficulties of providing financial services in rural communities (see *The Rural Branch Conundrum*, *Bancology*, March 2006), and the **Bankroll** offers an intriguing option for such markets. An institution that serves a broad rural territory could drive the **Bankroll** to one market each Monday, another each Tuesday, and so on, delivering at least some banking capacity to communities that would otherwise have no access to financial services.

For banks, this delivery model could aid in fulfilling CRA requirements; for credit unions, it could allow charter

expansions by leveraging the underserved-area provisions outlined in recent legislation. Either way, rural communities win, as multiple towns can share the personnel and fixed-asset costs of a single branch.

We applaud the innovative thinking from Romary Associates, and you can learn more at www.romary.com. We believe in promoting financial services delivery in markets of all sizes, so if you've developed or utilized a different small market branching option that you'd like to share, let us know.



@nwcuc: This weekend's 1st-time home buyer workshops were great! We want to do more free finance workshops this summer... any topic requests? :-) (*Northwest Community CU*)

@FABandT: The next 4 people to respond to this message are going to receive a spiffy new travel mug from FAB&T! You can choose either black or pink! (*First Arkansas Bank & Trust*)

@umpquabank: What makes Umpqua Bank unique? 3 Years in a Row on Fortune 500 best places to work! Happy associates make happy customers!

@allegiancecu: Tomorrow is the last day to donate food at any of our locations for the Oklahoma Food Bank! Let's help those in need.

@SEFCU: Have a great location for a new branch? Join the discussion!
<http://bit.ly/WVHWHz>

@Belco_CU: Heard about some fraud last week. Belco is serious about keeping member info safe. Learn more:
<http://tinyurl.com/pwksxr>

@GCEFCU: Discontinue your monthly paper statements in May for a chance to win an iPod Nano. Follow this link for more info:
<http://twi.cc/FzGm> (*Gulf Coast Educators FCU*)

@ArvestBank: Fort Smith Art Center Meets Fundraising Requirement, Will Receive Building Donation from Arvest Bank

@KUCreditUnion: Our insert in TODAY's Journal World is your chance to win tons of prizes to celebrate our new branch at 23rd & Naismith!

@NorthShoreBank: What can the \$8,000 first time homebuyer credit do for you? Find out at our free homebuyer seminar. <http://ow.ly/9qtM>

@HeartlandCU: Heartland member reports a phish by wireless text. See <http://tinyurl.com/caz9wd>

@INGDIRECT: We know you want that jet ski, but here are a few ways to use your tax refund wisely.
<http://tinyurl.com/oowcxk>

@FCFCU: Our members received their dividend from Reward Checking today. It's a great way to start the month! <http://www.indyrewardchecking.com> (*Finance Center FCU*)

@mapsCU: Postage rates went up today. If you aren't already using online bill pay, now is a great time to sign up [@mapsco.com](http://mapsco.com) to avoid buying stamps

@TwinStarCU: TV ads for credit unions of WA running this week. Check out the website! <http://ow.ly/rZV>

@OECU: Purchase your next vehicle through OECU and register for a chance to win a FREE vacation! See more details at <http://www.oecu.org>. (*Oklahoma Employees CU*)

@kembacu: May 18 - 23 is Credit Union for Kids Week. Support Children's Miracle Network to save and improve the lives of children everywhere.

So, that's how it works. One of the great things about Twitter is that it is a FREE medium. There are dozens of ways to acquire followers, and before long you are talking directly to your client base. And the beauty is that they want this conversation and have opted in, versus being interrupted by your traditional advertising.

Want to learn more about maximizing Twitter? We're just the right tweeps for the job. Follow us: [@bancography](http://twitter.com/bancography) and [@john_mathes](http://twitter.com/john_mathes).

John Mathes leads the Brand Strategy practice for Bancography. Contact him about how to position your institution on Twitter at (770) 360-5710 or john@bancography.com.

NEWS

Bancography will exhibit at the
**American Bankers Association
 Marketing Conference**
 September 13 – 15 in
 San Antonio.
 Stop by and visit
 us at Booth 207.

To enhance our clients' experience with *Bancography Plan*, Bancography launched *Bancography Briefings*. This new online series debuted Tuesday, May 5. We shared branching trends in the banking industry, along with tips on how to effectively analyze potential branch sites with *Bancography Plan*. We will host another *Bancography Briefings* session sometime this summer. Stay tuned or contact Laura Levie at 205-252-6671 or laura@bancography.com for more information.

In the upcoming months, Bancography will release its **2009 Bancography Brand Value Index**. The *Bancography Brand Value Index* calculates the value of an institution's brand and ranks that institution among its peers. For more information about the rankings, visit www.bancography.com/Brand_Value_Index.html.

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