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## NEW MARKETING CHALLENGE: WHAT ARE YOU TRYING THAT'S NEW AND WORKS?

The Headache: Marketing in a new media world

Our question: What is your bank doing? Does it work? What will you try in the future?

Come share your ideas, pick up a few!

One banker's remedy: Avoiding "shrinking violet syndrome" on our website

Here's how Shelby Reno "passed the aspirin." She's senior vice-president, marketing, Independent Bank, \$2.9 billion-assets, Ionia, Mich.

We have focused on three areas to stay on the offensive: website; safety and soundness positioning and relationship marketing.

1. Maximizing a key external communication tool, our website, is critical today. Studies show that during difficult times, bank websites become shrinking violets. We've continued to stay focused on new content relative to safety and soundness, bringing homeowner assistance resources and bank-owned properties to the forefront, maintaining a home-page online feedback tool; highlighting our core products and services to optimize deposit growth; and celebrating our successes at the community level in our News section.

An in-depth four-phase website audit began in January and is ending successfully this month. Additionally, our search engine optimization has been stepped up.

2. Positioning the bank as one that takes safety and soundness very seriously has proven successful. Our entrance doors at our 105 retail locations feature a safety and soundness message, with the opposite side featuring quality service at a value. This, along with providing up-to-date information on FDIC coverage and other recent government changes inside our lobbies, is a top priority.

3. Remaining grounded in our community banking roots by staying focused on relationship marketing is proving a prudent move. Our deposit growth has been steady because tellers, sales reps, and leaders are staying proactively connected to our customers. Specifically in marketing, a monthly onboarding or "welcome" mail program launched in April. New customers receive a self-mailer that features their first name four times, as well as their home branch manager's name, direct line, email, and photo. It highlights three additional products. Understanding that a relationship is most vulnerable in its first 90 days, this extra connector will make a difference.

This blog was adapted from the August 2009 print version of "Pass the Aspirin."

Now let's hear your ideas!

(Editorial Note: Contributions to Pass the Aspirin may also appear in our print edition. While we will ask for your e-mail address, this is only as an aid to verifying identity and will not be used for any marketing or promotional purpose. The e-mail address will not be published.)

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