
Pass-the-Aspirin: New media marketing challenge (July 24, 2009)

The Headache: What new efforts has your bank been trying in marketing? How well are they working?

Remedy 1

Suzanne McAuley, vice-president, marketing and community relations, First American Bank, \$295 million-assets, Norman, Okla.

With new social marketing tools available at every turn, First American Bank has decided to use an unconventional approach, at least in the banking industry, to promote our bank, our products, and our events. Twitter has been an up-and-coming resource for many retail companies to communicate more personally to their customers. We asked, "Why couldn't banks do this as well?" As one of the early adopter banks in Oklahoma, @bankfab has seen an increase in "followers," as well as an increase in traffic to our bank website. We have been able to promote our products and services via "tweets" on Twitter.

We used giveaways as a way to attract customers into the bank. Our first rainy day "tweet" promotion was a FAB umbrella to anyone who came into any banking center and mentioned "Twitter." A couple of weeks later, we tried our second Twitter promotion. A mention of "Twitter" would put an extra \$10 into a customer's account. Our responses increased six fold.

First American Bank started utilizing the social networking site, Facebook, to attract new customers and keep in touch with our current customers. We have been able to post pictures of events that we've promoted through Facebook and we've had a great response from our customers and friends in the community.

Twitter and Facebook have proven to be a new and innovative way to correspond with the people that mean the most to us—our customers. We're very excited about utilizing these two channels to better personalize our relationships with our banking customers.

Remedy 2

Shelby Reno, senior vice-president, marketing, Independent Bank, \$2.9 billion-assets, Ionia, Mich.

We have focused on three areas within marketing and communications to stay on the offensive during these challenging economic times: 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 efforts have been stepped up to ensure optimal searchability.

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 the most 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 also proving to be a prudent strategic move. Our deposit growth has been steady because our 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. Through this effort, new customers receive a self-mailer that features their first name four times throughout the piece, as well as their home branch manager's name, direct line, email, and photo. In addition, it highlights three additional product promotions. It's too early to tell, but understanding that a relationship is most vulnerable in its first 90 days, this extra connector will make a difference.

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