Date Your Bank, Then Build a Relationship

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When I look at the list of customers in my loan portfolio, I can remember how that person first became my customer. In some cases, they had an existing bank account and needed to borrow money. Other folks inquired about interest rates or how much of a down payment they would need on a purchase. But after nearly three decades, a great many of my bank customers are friends, neighbors, community acquaintances or family members of other customers. In fact, my portfolio includes some folks who are third generation customers whose parents and grandparents have been my good customers for many years. It kind of reminds me how you are introduced to your eventual mate in a dating relationship. You are exposed to a network of potential companions and then you spend some time together to see if that person will get to stay around for a while.

In today's technologically advanced environment, there's a great push to utilize automated programs to conduct the business of banking. At our bank, we are tremendously excited to have recently offered lots of new features such as mobile banking, Apple Pay, debit cards with embedded chips and Card Valet for added security. Our products and services have all been enhanced with features that expedite a transaction for faster access to money or to pay for goods and services much quicker. Many banking questions can be answered with an informative website. In some cases, the technology allows our customer to have complete control of their banking and their money with minimal or no personal interaction with anyone at the bank.

And yet, the customers still need to have a comfort level in the technical systems and the folks who set up, maintain, and control those systems at the bank in order to know which products and services to utilize. In short, you still need a relationship with your Banker. Sometimes, that relationship is with a familiar Bank Teller or Customer Service Representative you've come to know when conducting business the old fashioned way before all this technology was available. That's the person you ask when you want to be sure you've got the right product to meet your needs or who guides you if you aren't quite sure you hit the right button when you processed your transaction using that new technology.

Other times, it's a Lender or Financial Advisor who guided you in the past when you didn't understand how to accomplish what was needed for a loan or investment.   I can honestly say I have worked with people on the best day of their lives as they close on a loan to purchase their dream home and the worst day as they figure out how to pay for a loved one's funeral or catastrophic medical care. My customers have shared life's milestones with me as they introduce me to a new spouse, bring their new baby in for a visit, or figure out how to finance a college education. We've adjusted payment schedules over a job change and celebrated a promotion as they upgrade their transportation. We've upsized and downsized homes together, rebuilt after a storm or a fire, recovered after a divorce, and carried on after the death of a spouse. Those services require more than just technology, and are cultivated over time with varying degrees of comfort as relationships are built.

Please don't misunderstand – I'm a huge fan of the technological advances we are implementing. Lots of banks offer this technology, so it's not going to be the sole reason someone chooses us to help with the financial needs and serve as their bank of choice. Surely, folks will look at all of these ways to save time and money. But there's still a need for a comfortable relationship with your bank and Banker – not unlike that dating process I mentioned earlier. Look at all this technology as a kind of database for banks similar to Match.com or EHarmony.com. You can simply date the bank online for a bit before you invest more of your time. When you're ready, call or come by for a visit and we'll build a relationship.