

# THE IN-STORE ADVANTAGE



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**"And if you don't think you have anything to be grateful for, keep looking. Because you don't just receive optimism. You can't wait for things to be great and then be grateful for that. You've got to behave in a way that promotes that." »Michael J Fox**

## Wisely Immature

A recent conversation with a bank executive had me reflecting on a comment I've made numerous times over the years.

He referenced "mature branches" several times in our chat.

Now, being called mature is usually a positive thing. I've found that when bankers use the term, however, it usually signals that growth expectations are not high.

It suggests that we've carved out our share of the available business around here and the competitors have carved out theirs.

The often-used comment that again popped into my head was, "The best way to jumpstart a mature branch is to put an immature manager in it."

## Life-Long Impressions

As a young person, I never gave much thought to banks.

Like most, I opened my first account while in high school at my parents' bank.

That bank was acquired by a larger bank while I was in college.

After getting a full-time job upon graduation, I was ready to buy a car on my own for the first time - a used 1987 VW Jetta.

It is remarkable how certain interactions can stay with a person for decades.

My initial meeting with a loan officer of "my bank" was such an event.

I naively figured that I had banked with this place for over five years and had never so much as bounced a

Okay, I'll cede that sounds ridiculous.

We obviously don't want immature managers running things.

Well...except when it comes to their attitude about new customer opportunities in a market.

A person who is new to a branch or market doesn't look at existing customers in their lobby or non-customers out in the market as having been fully "vetted." They don't assume that everyone they meet already knows them and their bank.

And they obviously realize they aren't familiar with these folks' stories or current banking needs.

They introduce themselves to people and have more conversations, leading to uncovering opportunities that would otherwise go undiscovered.

My point is not that a new manager or new bank team is the cure for stagnant growth.

What I would suggest, however, is that we continually remind our teams (and ourselves) that life and business are not static.

There's much we don't know.

Every single customer and potential customer you interact with today is a slightly different person than the last time you interacted with them. The more time passed, the more that has changed.

And, sure, most folks answer to "What's new?" is "Not much."

But that's seldom the case.

Looking to foster conversations that encourage people to talk about themselves and the things that are on their mind leads to mutually productive interactions.

At a minimum, a customer (or potential customer) sees that you are interested in them as an individual.

Better yet, you may discover areas they'd like assistance in that they may not have a short while ago.

New opportunities continually arise even in "mature markets" - when we remain curious and conversational.

Will you?

check. I remember thinking that should mean something. (It didn't.)

I had a solid work history for a college kid and now had a fulltime job. I also had a decent down payment.

The loan officer said, "We can make this loan if your parents co-sign."

I remember objecting to needing a co-signer, and him condescendingly telling me, "Well, if you make the payments, your parents have nothing to worry about."

I stammered, "Okay, well, let me think about it," and left without a loan.

At that moment, I thought I hated banks and bankers.

That guy turned an event I was ready to be proud of (buying a car on my own) into a gut punch.

I had no idea what to do next. Then my dad mentioned Willie, a guy who coached me in Biddy Basketball a decade before. Willie was a banker.

I walked into the branch he worked in and was lucky that he was available. He had me laughing and at ease in no time.

When I told him about the experience at my bank, he told me, "They're now an out-of-town bank with an in-town branch. All they look at is a number. We know our customers, their families, and the names of their dogs."

He then looked at me and said, "So...are you going to pay us back if we loan you the money?"

I shyly said, "Uh...yes." I remember him smiling and saying, "Good. We don't need a repossessed Jetta sitting in our parking lot."

He made the loan and I banked with them until the day I moved out of state.

Whenever I'd run into Willie, he'd joke, "You taking care of our car?"

That always made me laugh. It also reminded me of who helped me when I needed it.

He single-handedly changed my impression of banks and bankers and I respect him to this day.

You make life-long impressions on some customers almost every day.

What will yours be?

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**"I have learned not to allow rejection to move me." » Cicely Tyson**

*Dave Martin, author of The In-Store Advantage, has become one of the most prolific writers in the banking industry. His keynote presentations, seminars, and podcasts have an authenticity and humor that brings teams of all sizes and seniority levels together.*

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