



Universal Banker: Technology Essentials

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UNIVERSAL BANKER: TECHNOLOGY ESSENTIALS

In August of 2014, the ABA announced its new Universal Banker [UB] Certificate, “which is designed to prepare frontline branch staff to serve as the single point of contact for satisfying the diverse needs of walk-in customers.”

“Universal bankers have multifaceted job responsibilities that range from basic transaction processing to product and service sales and referrals.

The certificate’s curriculum focuses on key product knowledge, relationship building, customer service, and expert referral skills.”¹ In order to be ABA certified as a UB, a person must complete an eleven course curriculum which requires about 23 hours in total, according to the ABA website.

The financial industry has been talking about the need for UBs now for several years. This makes perfect sense at a time where branches are being down-sized and staffing reduced. It also resonates with the larger transition of branches from transaction centers to financial services centers. But now the concept has some definition thanks both to the financial institutions who have shared their experiences as well as the industry thought leaders who have also weighed-in. An ABA UB certificate is certainly a good start, but the collective experience of those who started the transition from tellers to universal bankers defines four other key elements to a successful transition.

1. The right expectations – While universal bankers might coexist with traditional tellers in a given branch where transaction volumes so justify, the new normal is to staff branches with UBs instead of tellers. FIs need to understand that this change requires a different sort of individual with ‘soft skills.’ Not all of your current teller staff will be able to make this transition. It is also a sure bet that FIs will need to adjust their recruiting and hiring practices.

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2. Proper training – Even with the availability of the ABA Certification, banks and credit unions will need to aggressively re-train staff. UBs earn higher incomes as compared to tellers. The change to UBs, therefore, must be more than nominal. They need to be more productive on a wider variety of tasks and duties.

3. Branch configurations – Universal bankers cannot be “tethered” to a traditional teller line. According to Bancography, “...the teller line must be redesigned to allow an employee to easily migrate from a paying and receiving station to a sales and service workstation.”ⁱⁱ Others call for a total branch redesign to an open plan concept or ‘dialog banking.’

4. Enabling technology – the consensus is that the transition to universal bankers must be supported by technology that makes the more mundane transaction processing simpler, faster, and more customer-focused. Enter the Teller Cash Recycler!

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According to an American Banker article entitled Channel Changers: the Rise of the Universal Banker, “Another piece of equipment proving key to the universal banker model is the cash recycler, which automates transactions, stores and dispenses money and lets multiple employees work out of the same drawer.”ⁱⁱⁱ

We also see the emerging technology of expanded function lobby kiosks being important to the UB staffing model. These kiosks can provide virtually all of the transactions that are traditionally performed by a teller either in a full self-service mode or in an assisted service mode. Those customers who want to ‘go it alone’ can and those that need personal assistance can engage directly with a universal banker. This gives any customer visiting the branch a choice as to how to transact business.

As expressed by Kevin Travis of Novantas and quoted in Bank Technology News, “Assisted self-service is the way it will end up fairly quickly.” The idea is to get customers more comfortable with using self-service technology, while at the same time, offering them an opportunity for face-to-face contact.^{iv}

Continuing the Conversation

Glory is happy to discuss these technologies in support of your move to the Universal banker model. Visit us at www.glory-global.com

i Quotations taken from: ABA Press Release, August 21, 2014

ii Bancology Newsletter, Bancography, June 2009

iii “Channel Changers: the Rise of the Universal Banker”, American Banker, Heather Landy and Mary Wisniewski, May 28, 2014)

iv “Tellers Become Guides and Storytellers in High-Tech Branches”, Bank Technology News, Mary Wisniewski, April 1, 2014.

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