



Assisted Service Technology:

Harmonizing the Branch, Part 2



ASSISTED SERVICE TECHNOLOGY: HARMONIZING THE BRANCH, PART 2

Now that we have introduced assisted service technology in Part 1 and explored its potential impact and benefits, Part 2 takes a closer look at how assisted service can help to achieve harmony within the branch as well as with other delivery channels. Under the heading 'Finding your Harmony', we put forward the most important questions to be discussed as part of your decision process, whether you are just beginning to consider such a solution or your decision process is well underway. Part 2 concludes with brief comments related to reaching a 'harmonious outcome' in your branch network.



STRIKING HARMONY IN THE BRANCH

Care must be taken to hit the ‘right notes’ when making decisions about technology in the branch. Self or assisted service must be perceived by customers as an expansion of service options, and not as a ‘do-it-yourself’ directive. Bankers must consider why the client travelled to the bank branch in the first place! To move forward without this perspective will predictably result in dissonance rather than harmony.

To support harmony in the branch between the digital and physical it is crucial to keep simplicity as a priority when deploying technology. This is especially true when dealing with customer-facing technologies. A financial institution (FI) gains little by deploying technologies that bring with them complexities and add to channel confusion for their customers. Ignoring the customer’s perspective runs the risk of being characterized as ‘tone deaf.’

Unfortunately, companies developing banking technologies are not always helpful in creating simple solutions. “For omnichannel [banking] experiences to pay off for customers, the design principles of ease-of-use, efficiency and emotion must come to the forefront.” said Rajeev Sawhney, President of Strategic Business at Mphasis. He goes on to state, “There is an innate desire of the technologists to add feature functionality and thereby lose the simplicity that is so essential for everyday users. I am not saying that feature functionality is not essential; all I am saying is that ease-of-use and simplicity should be at the core of the [user] interface design.”¹¹

DISSONANCE IS DEFINED AS A TENSION OR CLASH RESULTING FROM THE COMBINATION OF TWO [OR MORE] DISHARMONIOUS OR UNSUITABLE ELEMENTS.

STRIKING HARMONY

IN THE BRANCH

[continued]

Snehal Vashi, Glory's Senior Vice President, Self Service Applications, Software adds, "The challenge is to make the complex teller transaction simple and intuitive enough for the customer to perform the task by themselves."

Getting this right requires a special emphasis on the user interface experience on larger multi-touch surfaces, in a semi-public setting. This is not just a channel transition – it is also a significantly different experience from using a touch-screen phone or tablet, as in a mobile banking solution. If one does not develop the user interface correctly, an all too likely outcome is customer frustration, with staff required to intervene in a high percentage of transactions to assist customers, which, defeats the purpose of putting AST devices in the branches entirely.



HARMONY

WITH OTHER CHANNELS

With well-trained and empowered branch staff equipped with the proper technologies, the branch is ready and capable of delivering on the branch harmony objective. AST, when carefully implemented, mimics the customer experiences found in face-to-face transactions while also creating an experience familiar through other digital channels. Through correct implementation of integration with other existing banking systems, sharing of channel data allows for efficiencies to be realized, such as AST user authentication using online banking credentials. On an increasing basis, the branch will also become a place to execute physical media transactions pre-staged in a different channel – these will be completed in the branch, with limited staff intervention, using AST.

At this point, we hope it is clear that assisted service solutions can deliver important benefits for both the institution and its customers. Maximum value is achieved when we successfully harmonize digital banking with physical world banking, an opportunity uniquely deliverable through the branch channel, and well-supported by the assisted service concept. As Accenture states, “[The branch of the future] will be a vital destination where digital banking and human interaction meet.”¹²

“This all sounds great” you say, “but it’s easier said than done!” In the next section, we will examine how you can embark on getting it done in the most efficient and effective manner.

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Source: Accenture Consulting





FINDING CONSONANCE

Earlier, we discussed dissonance. Dissonance is what is likely to happen in your branches without a carefully considered approach to decision-making. The overall goal here is to follow a process that achieves the opposite outcome... consonance. Achieving consonance simply means hitting notes that complement one another rather than striking random tones that confuse and collide with one another. So exactly how do we get there? It begins with consideration of a few important questions.

HOW DO YOU ENVISION YOUR IN-BRANCH SERVICE MODEL CHANGING?

The driver for branch transformation often lies in the desire to alter the network's cost-benefit formula. In doing so, it is critically important to realize that each change to a branch (i.e. technology introduced, physical size and layout, level of personal interaction) contributes to the whole of the experience for your customers.

Glory has observed and participated in the retail marketplace for years as retailers have introduced self-service checkout solutions, re-introduced staff support for users of these systems, and worked to create balance between full, partial, and self-service solutions. We have realized that there are simple but important distinctions between customers, related to the complexity of products or services they are purchasing, the total value of a

purchase, and their own confidence with their buying decisions. Many of these learnings carry over to the application of self-service systems in financial environments.

An early consideration is that the transactional needs of financial consumers are more complex and sophisticated than in transactional retail events, and harder to recognize as 'completed'. They are also much more personal, as they relate to the 'hard earned' assets of the customer, resulting in higher expectations from customers, as they expect the bank or banker to appreciate this aspect of the transaction. You must consider how your customers need to work with you today, and what they value from interactions with you. Is it operating hours convenience? Unique services? Speed? Accuracy? Location? Personal attention? Do certain areas of focus create better outcomes for you and your customers?

FINDING CONSONANCE

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Before you engage vendors to learn the specifics of their offerings, you must decide what kind of customer experience best represents your brand. Ask yourself: Do we have a conceptual service model to meet the needs of those customers that made the effort to visit our branch?



HOW DOES THE IN-BRANCH TECHNOLOGY FACILITATE THIS NEW SERVICE MODEL?

There is no shortage of in-branch service technologies to choose from in support of your priorities. Each technology option will enable a different service model, and will uniquely alter the branch network's cost-benefit formula. After you have considered the customer experience and service model it is now time to assess technology differences. Most solutions appear to offer a high degree of feature commonality – they physically look like high-tech ATM's, right? It is the unique features and the unique application capabilities in each solution that warrant your attention. It is generally within the unique features that the true value proposition for an AST solution resides. And alongside this, you will see significant differences in the capability of each solution option to support your desired service model. It is important during this assessment not to substitute capability for suitability.

HOW DOES THE NEW IN-BRANCH SERVICE MODEL BENEFIT YOUR CUSTOMERS AND INSTITUTION?

In the early days of branch transformation, institutions often focused strictly on implementing changes that benefited them (i.e. reduced or shared staff). Over the last couple of years, we have seen a shift in approaches that better consider the customer's needs. This shift is a positive development as the only successful transformation project is one that harmonizes the benefits for both parties. A key area of consideration is availability of services. Will you offer comprehensive services in all branches, or only some? Will the services be delivered by local staff, by remote staff, on an unscheduled or only a scheduled basis? Will you support personal and business customers? Frequency of need at a site, cost of meeting the need and availability of alternative service delivery (e.g. via a digital channel) will become important parts of the overall equation.

FINDING

CONSONANCE

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WHAT ARE YOUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS FOR YOUR NEW IN-BRANCH SERVICE MODEL?

Branch transformation has been a subject of much discussion and experimentation for several years. Some of the more leading edge institutions recognized the lack of coordinated sheet music and proceeded by experimenting with one or more possible solutions. These early experiments were instructional and served to reinforce the importance of understanding how a proposed solution will affect the service model, and how that impact will be measured. While transformational goals vary from institution to institution, the impacts usually revolve around some combination of cost reduction and increased sales or branch profitability (which can be measured in a

multitude of ways). It is important that the success criteria be established early on. The specific measures of costs and sales must be objective and measurable. With these measures firmly understood, you can now shift your attention to the critical area of adoption.

HOW WILL YOU ENSURE ACCEPTANCE BY YOUR CUSTOMERS AND IN-BRANCH EMPLOYEES?

No solution can deliver desired benefits unless it is accepted by customers and your own staff. To ensure this happens, change management must be a key consideration as part of any implementation program. As new ways of working are introduced, staff members and customers must go through a period

of change management. Change can be hard for consumers, and rejection can manifest itself in the form of reduced account holders. To prevent this, the solution must create user confidence, tangible benefit, and a sense of reward. Bank staff must see the technology as an opportunity, not a threat. The solution cannot be seen as separating the relationship between the customer and bank staff, it should enhance the relationship. As you are vetting technology vendors, it is important to identify which ones have industry experience introducing and driving adoption of in-branch, technology-based solutions. You will need a partner who can ensure that in-branch changes are properly planned and executed with your personnel.

FINDING CONSONANCE

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RESOURCE COMMITMENT IS ESSENTIAL

Be mindful that you will need to commit time, energy, and funding both to the branch transformation decision process and the implementation thereafter. Having the right people involved representing the executive team, finance, branch operations, marketing, HR, and IT is essential. When choosing a supplier, you should consider the supplier's ability to explain recommended investments across your business, to assist in optimizing investment by leveraging your existing capabilities and theirs, and to devise a plan that maximizes impact in the shortest time. This should include a consideration of their approach and commitment to proving and then expanding the value proposition for the solution over time.



CONSONANCE IS DEFINED AS THE COMBINATION OF NOTES THAT ARE IN HARMONY WITH EACH OTHER DUE TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEIR FREQUENCIES.

REACHING A HARMONIOUS OUTCOME

Starting-off your consideration of an assisted service solution on the right footing is a critical element in a successful blending of the digital and physical within the branch channel. Asking the right questions, setting the right expectations, and planning the right resources strike the right initial notes in the process of achieving a perfect balance between digital tech and human touch. These consonant sounds will ultimately lead to a harmonious branch experience for your customers as well as your staff.



POSTSCRIPT: CONTINUING THE DISCUSSION

Glory is a long-time industry leader in financial branch automation solutions. Having worked with financial institutions of all sizes and types to optimize their retail delivery capabilities and improve branch cash-handling processes, we are uniquely positioned to help sort through what can be a confusing array of technology options for transforming branch delivery. We stand ready to assist you with your branch transformation initiative, whether you are just getting started or have already progressed your evaluation of options.

For more information visit
www.glory-global.com
or speak to your sales
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ENDNOTES

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Snehal Vashi is an accomplished senior technology executive with extensive and varied software product development experience spanning 22 years. As a recognized innovator, he brought international award-winning products to market for a wide range of industry segments. Those awards include PC Magazine Product of the Year, Windows Magazine Product of the Year, and Call Center Magazine Product of the Year.

¹¹Three Design Principles for Omnichannel Experience, BAI Banking Strategies, Rajeev Sawhney, December 2, 2015.
<https://www.bai.org/banking-strategies/article-detail/three-design-principles-for-omni-channel-experience>

¹²2016 North America Consumer Digital Banking Survey, Banking on Value, Accenture Consulting, Page 10
<https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insight-consumer-digital-banking-survey-2016>

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