

## **Four unproductive prospecting habits that are hard to break:**

*By Ned Miller*

Many bankers defend to the death “prospecting best practices” that are not always productive. See if any of your team members are holding on to any of the most common.

1. **“I believe in getting involved in the community.”** Bankers should be encouraged to join non-profit boards. It’s a way for younger bankers to develop leadership skills that can pay dividends later in their careers. Bankers of all ages should also attend events that support the worthy causes of local organizations. But let’s not confuse being active in the community with developing new business. Yes, it’s possible to parlay your contacts into leads, but it’s not a given. And, for most bankers, going to events shouldn’t replace sales calls.
2. **“I like to make joint calls on prospects with my Cash Management (or Merchant Services) rep.”** Yes, but only after you have made at least one call on the prospect by yourself. If you haven’t spent time learning about your prospect’s business yet, don’t trot out any of your business partners. While you could make the case that every business needs some level of cash management support, your job as a banker is to find out what your prospect’s specific needs are and then decide which of your specialists should appear at your side. Remember, it’s about priorities—theirs, not yours. If you bring a Cash Management rep in too soon, you may miss a better opportunity to assist a prospect with a more pressing need.
3. **“I take a CPA out to lunch every week.”** And what do you have to show for it? According to most estimates, only about 25% of CPAs are in a position to make referrals to bankers. So, if you’re buying lots of lunches, make sure that you’re dealing with the minority who can and do refer business. You need to assess the quantity and quality of referrals you have received. If you haven’t seen many—or perhaps more importantly, closed any—you may be hanging out with the wrong accountants.
4. **“Since all business owners are credit-driven, I use credit as a lead product in my prospecting efforts.”** Many commercial and business bankers lead with loans. High-performers differentiate their message by focusing on the prospect’s or client’s next need, not on what they’re comfortable selling.

A mature business uses more than 10 different financial services, not just loans. Look for the “best way in the door,” the need that will begin a relationship (which is not necessarily a loan).

If you would like to discuss how to refine your organization’s approach to prospecting, call Ned Miller at 610-296-4772