

Maximising Sales Effectiveness



A UK Retail Banking 'Mystery Shopping' Exercise

"No bank is the clear winner at using the financial review process as a strategic sales tool; several opportunities remain unexploited"
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Preface

UK Retail Banking is not an easy place to make money, particularly in the current recessionary circumstances. The market is mature, highly competitive and increasingly commoditised. In an attempt to improve bottom line performance, there has been an understandable focus on cost reduction. However, cost cutting can only go on for so long – if taken too far it can undermine operational effectiveness and alienate customers. Some of the banks discovered this to their cost, facing a backlash from customers when they tried to rationalise their operations by closing branches. This left the banks with a dilemma: how to continue to improve bottom line performance when the cost / income ratio had already been markedly improved through operational efficiency programmes and when customers continued to demand to be serviced through a well-maintained branch network. The banks have been left with only one long-term option: grow the top line.

The realisation that direct channels were not going to kill off the branch network left the banks with a significant challenge: how to maximise the return on what was effectively a fixed cost base. This led to a shift in focus from a predominantly service-based to a 'sales & service' model which, in turn, gave birth to the 'branch of the future' and high cost refurbishment programmes, some of which have been more successful than others. In our view, there are opportunities for the banks to improve the returns they generate from their branch networks which can be realised more quickly and with lower capital investment than branch modernisation programmes require. It does not involve rocket science, rather simply getting the basics right: positioning the branch network to operate through efficient processes, giving staff the knowledge and skills they require to be able to sell effectively, and putting in place structures to motivate staff and to reward constructive behaviours.

With these concepts in mind, we decided to conduct a mystery shopping exercise to provide a snapshot view of the way in which the banks are pursuing sales through their branch networks. As this paper will show, we saw a picture of very mixed performance, with some great customer experiences and some that were distinctly lacking. In our view, none of the banks we surveyed can be wholly satisfied with what we saw. Whilst this may seem a critical stance, it is actually great news for the banks we included in our study – with pressure on margins as intense as ever, there remain opportunities which can be exploited with relative ease, and with limited capital requirement, to achieve a marked and sustainable improvement to revenue generation. And there has never been a more opportune time than the present to generate maximum value from every step in the sales process.

Executive Summary

Since it became apparent to banks that the internet was not going to render branch network and call centres obsolete, there has been a strong focus on maximising the return on investment from physical distribution – selling more through existing channels.

Many customers use branches and telephony predominantly for service transactions; banks have to use these contacts as starting points for identifying and pursuing appropriate sales opportunities. Many organisations claim to be getting better at doing this, but Hitachi Consulting decided to put this assertion to the test. During the second half of 2008, a mystery shopping exercise was conducted, focussing on eight of the leading players in the UK retail banking sector, with the goal of answering one key question: how do they react when a golden sales opportunity lands in their lap?

The process was split into three parts, for the purposes of research:

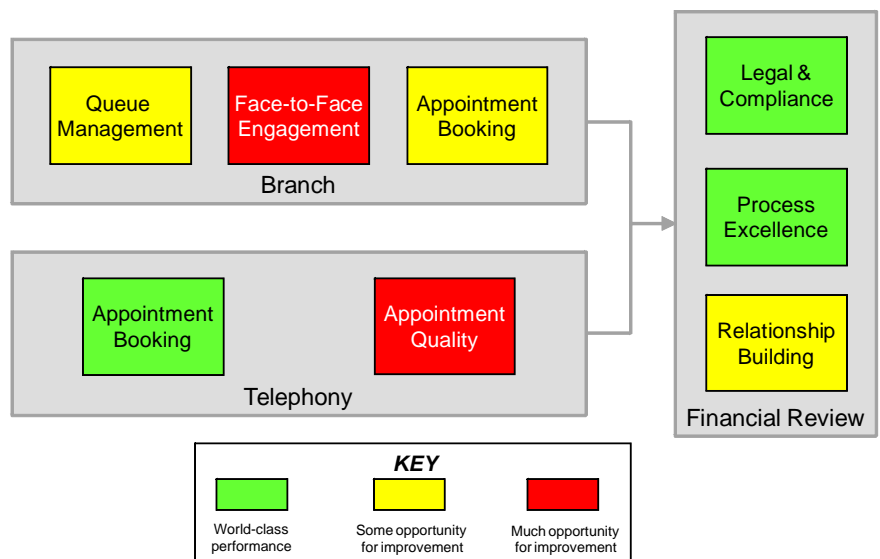
- **The In-Branch Experience:** a customer goes into a branch and asks for an appointment to discuss their financial needs.
- **The Telephony Experience:** a customer calls their bank to ask for the same.
- **The Financial Review:** the management of customer meetings to identify and then capitalise on sales opportunities.

In all cases, the mystery shoppers were customers who could potentially offer high value to the banks and who were openly asking to be sold to. We looked at the following core issues as we ran through the three customer scenarios:

- How good were the banks at managing the customer interaction and delivering a world-class **customer experience**?
- How **operationally excellent** were the banks at performing the sales process?
- How well did the banks support their sales processes with proper adherence to their **regulatory commitments**?

As Figure 1 shows, we identified opportunities for the banks to improve performance throughout the end-to-end sales process.

Figure 1: Aggregate Assessment



The In-Branch Experience

There has been significant investment in branch refurbishment over the last few years and many banks have talked of turning their high street outlets into genuine retail spaces. They still have some distance to go if they are to make this a reality.

The focus on transactional efficiency is good, but the capability to identify and then capitalise on sales opportunities appears to be somewhat lacking. On the whole, our experience was that queue waiting times are at reasonable levels, although one researcher waited 14 minutes to see a cashier and another left the welcome desk after having stood there for 20 minutes, ignored by staff.

When researchers asked to see a Relationship Manager, only one of the banks offered an immediate appointment. Of the others, one bank could not offer an appointment at the time of day of the customer's choice, saying "We don't do lunchtime appointments." Another did not have an opening available for more than a week. Once the appointment had been made, there appeared to be an inconsistent focus on maintaining the quality of the meeting book with only two of the banks making 'waterproofing' phone calls to ensure that the customer intended to keep the appointment.

The Telephony Experience

The Telephony Experience was similarly mixed. If the mystery shopper was able to speak directly to the branch, he or she stood a far better chance of receiving a high-level of service. In two instances in which the shoppers had to go through a central telephony function, the banks were unable to book a branch appointment over the phone. In both cases, the researchers were promised a call back to confirm the meeting, but these were not forthcoming. At another bank the telephony operative tried and failed three times to contact a member of branch staff and eventually abandoned the call.

On the positive side, five of the banks attempted to pre-screen customers' needs. However, in one instance, the researcher's needs were incorrectly identified as being restricted purely to investments and at another the mystery shopper was called by a branch relationship manager to cancel the appointment as he believed she already had an appropriate current and savings account. No attempt was made to address her credit requirements and none of the banks made a waterproofing call to confirm the appointment.

While some banks performed better than others in the appointment booking process, one point was clear: across the sector there remain issues to be addressed in terms of both process efficiency and staff performance in identifying sales opportunities. The greatest areas for improvement were waterproofing, sales process and sales capability.

The Financial Review

Face-to-face contact with Relationship Managers also left room for improvement. At only two of the eight banks did the mystery shoppers feel that the Financial Review resulted in recommendations that fully responded to their financial needs. This may be partially attributable to the fact that only four of the banks used an on-screen 'fact-find' to structure the discussion, without which Relationship Managers tended to fail to identify the full range of customers' financial needs.

Equally, the capability and commitment of the Relationship Managers appeared mixed. At one of the banks the researcher received the 'hard sell' for an unsuitable product, while at another the Relationship Manager missed clear buying signals and failed to discuss specific products at all. At yet another, the researcher observed that "the Relationship Manager

gave the impression she wanted the meeting to end as soon as possible”.

Conclusions

Go into any organisation and you will find some processes working well, others inefficiently, some staff offering a world-class customer experience and others with clear development requirements. While the focus here has been on highlighting some of the improvement opportunities, our research has also identified some real strengths in all of the banks.

However, the overriding conclusion was clear: if banks are truly committed to moving to a retail model in physical distribution, there is some way to go before this becomes a reality. Given consumers' generally high expectations of retail customer service, even if a mere handful of individual experiences highlight serious concerns and areas for improvement, the banks will suffer disproportionately.

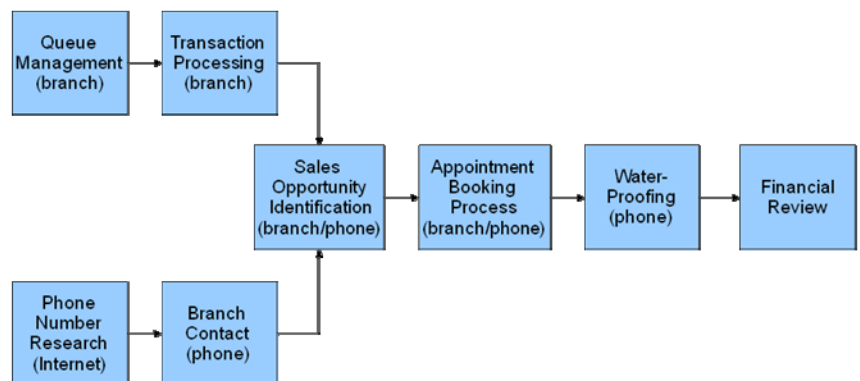
Methodology

Our objective with this study was simple: to take a snapshot view of the degree to which the leading UK banks are geared up to use their branch networks (and telephony services) as sales platforms. Our approach was to conduct a mystery shopping exercise in which our researchers were asked to attempt to secure a financial review in a branch outlet and then assess the ability of the member of staff with whom the review was conducted to sell to them both effectively and fairly.

At a high level, the approach can be summarised as follows:

- A researcher enters a branch to pay in cash. He joins the queue to see a cashier (unless he is approached by a floor walker / welcome desk operative). On engaging with the cashier, he pays in his cash and, unless offered one by the member of staff, asks for a financial review to discuss his product holdings. He asks for an appointment to be booked 3 working days later and then leaves the branch.
- As a second strand of research, a researcher goes onto the bank's website. She searches for a phone number either directly for her branch or for a central telephony function. She calls the number and requests an appointment 3 working days later in the branch of her choice to discuss her product holdings. She then ends the call.
- Having made an appointment either in branch or over the telephone, a researcher attends a branch for a financial review meeting. He tells the member of staff with whom he is meeting that he has no fixed view of his product requirements and is open to advice and suggestions. At the end of the review meeting, he leaves the branch.

Figure 2: Summary of the Sales Process



The reason for taking the approach of asking for a financial review was simple: we wanted to present the banks with an open opportunity to offer as wide a range of products and services to our researchers as they deemed appropriate. We were effectively giving them carte blanche to sell to us. By booking appointments through both of the branch network and internet / telephony, we were trying to research the ease with which a customer can secure a face-to-face meeting through the channel of their choice.

As discussed above, this research represents a snapshot view based on a limited research programme. We fully accept that the process we followed has not given us a statistically significant set of results. For this reason, we have adopted a comparative scoring system, giving the banks a score from 1 to 5 (1 representing significant opportunities to improve performance, 5 representing world-class performance) in each assessed area of performance. For example, we recorded queuing times in-branch as part of the research process. This data, along with other factors such as the behaviour of staff, contributed to the overall score in the area of Queue Management. We provide exact details of our scoring criteria in the relevant sections of the analysis of the results.

We invite readers to consider the outputs of the exercise for what they are: a view based on the experience of industry professionals engaging with the banks, a high level indicator of performance issues and a basis for further investigation.

We researched the following banks in this exercise:

- Abbey
- Barclays
- HBOS
- HSBC
- Lloyds TSB
- Nationwide
- NatWest
- RBS

We do not attribute results to individual banks. However, we are prepared to engage with each of the banks on an individual basis to discuss the findings specific to them.

The In-Branch Experience

Summary of Key Findings

- All of the banks which were mystery shopped were trying to match resource allocation to demand by flexing the number of cashiers on duty according to the time of day. Their success in doing so whilst maintaining high-levels of customer service was mixed at best: in Bank 4, queuing time to see a cashier was 14 minutes whilst in Bank 8 our mystery shopper waited for 20 minutes at the welcome desk.
- None of the 8 banks in the study deployed floor walkers. As a result, no triage system was in place to divert purely transactional activity to kiosks / other appropriate outlets and to identify customers with more complex financial needs.
- Cashiers appear to be strongly focused on the efficient processing of transactions. In only 2 of the 8 banks in the study did cashiers try to engage the customer about broader financial needs.
- The banks are not consistently capitalising on opportunities to sell to customers. Only 2 of the banks in the study were able to offer our mystery shopper an immediate appointment with a Relationship Manager. Of the others, one bank could not offer an appointment at the time of day of the mystery shopper's choice ("we don't do lunchtime appointments") and another could not offer an appointment until more than a week later.
- There appears to be an inconsistent focus on maintaining the quality of the appointment book with only two of the banks making waterproofing phone calls to ensure that the customer intended to keep the appointment.

Approach

This section of the mystery shopping exercise was intended to investigate the customer experience of transacting in a branch and procuring a meeting with a Relationship Manager to discuss broader financial needs. We set out to answer the following question: are the banks geared up to extract sales opportunities from the high volume of branch footfall they see each day or is the focus of the branch experience purely transactional? Additionally, we wanted to critique the in-branch customer experience, considering the efficiency with which customers are dealt with, and the ability and motivation of staff to meet their needs.

In relation to 'The In-Branch Experience', we scored the banks in the following key areas:

- **Queue Management:** the speed at which customers' needs are addressed and the ability of staff to triage customers (i.e. to direct customers to kiosks, cashiers or to the welcome desk as appropriate):
 - How many cashiers were on duty?
 - How many cashier windows were closed?
 - Was a member of staff walking the floor?
 - How many customers were ahead of you in the queue?
 - Were you approached by a member of staff whilst you were queuing to see a cashier?
 - How long did you have to queue before you saw a cashier?

- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** the efficiency with which customers' transactions are completed and the ability / preparedness of frontline staff to try to identify broader financial needs:
 - When you were with the cashier, how long did it take to pay in the cash?
 - Whilst you were talking to them, did the cashier – without prompting – offer you the opportunity of a financial review / another sort of meeting with a Relationship Manager?
 - If you had wanted to, would it have been possible to see a Relationship Manager right away?
 - Did the cashier / floor walker perform any kind of pre-meeting screening to ascertain your financial requirements?
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** the ability of the banks to offer customers an appointment in the branch of their choice at the time of their choice, and to ensure the quality of the forward appointment book by making waterproofing calls:
 - Were you able to make an appointment to see a Relationship Manager in the branch of your choice and at the time of your choice?
 - Was the appointment waterproofed?
 - If the appointment was waterproofed, when in relation to your appointment time did this take place and who made the phone call?

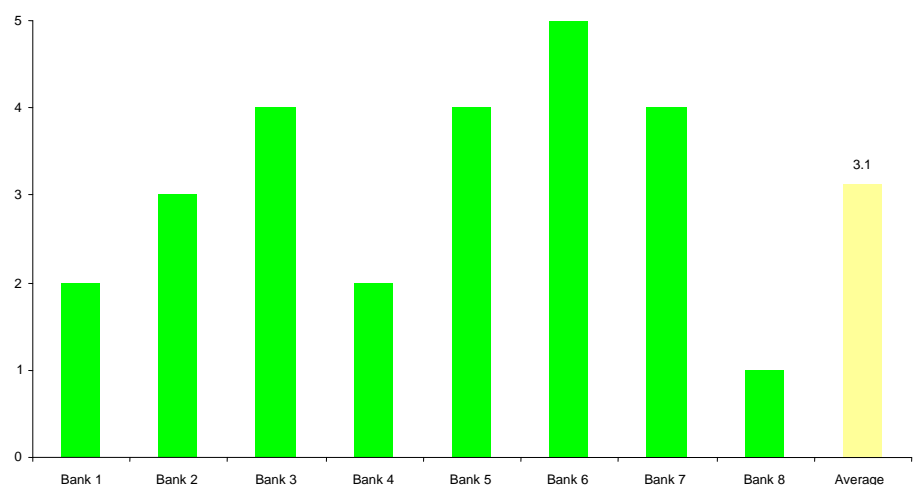
As discussed in 'Methodology', we attributed a score to each of the banks based on the data we gathered in response to the above questions (1 representing significant opportunities to improve performance, 5 representing world-class performance).

The remainder of this chapter addresses each of these aspects of the process in turn.

Queue Management

We scored the banks as follows on Queue Management.

Figure 3: Relative bank performance on Queue Management



"I waited for 20 minutes near the welcome desk along with three other customers, but no member of staff approached us. Everyone left in the end without speaking to anyone."

KEY

- 1 = 15 mins + wait; no approach from member of staff
- 2 = 10-15 mins wait; no approach from member of staff
- 3 = 5-10 mins wait; no approach from member of staff
- 4 = 0-5 mins wait; no approach from member of staff
- 5 = 0-5 mins wait; approach from member of staff

As Figure 3 shows, our research indicated a mixture of positive and indifferent customer experiences with regard to queue management. The worst performer was Bank 8, due to a 20 minute wait at an unstaffed welcome desk.

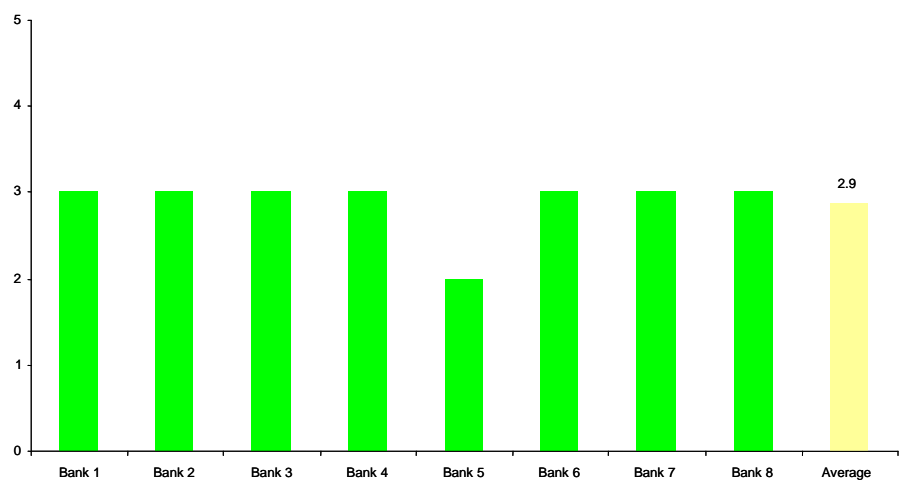
Bank 4 also scored poorly as a result of a 14 minute queuing time and no member of staff walking the floor to triage customer needs. Bank 1 also fared badly with an 11 minute queuing time and no proactive approach.

The strongest performance came from Bank 6 in which the customer was approached in the queue within 2 minutes and was able to ask for a financial review on the branch floor. This was the only occasion on which one of our researchers was approached in the queue.

Face-to-Face Engagement

Our research led us to give the banks scores on Face-to-Face Engagement. The basis for scoring is given in the key below Figure 4.

Figure 4: Relative bank performance on Face-to-Face Engagement



KEY

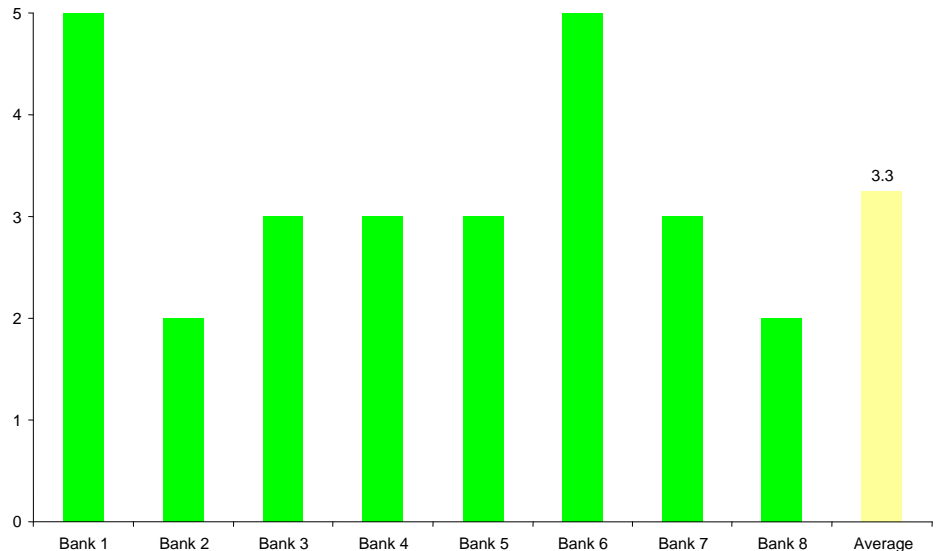
- 1 = 2 mins+ transaction time; no proactive contact
- 2 = 1-2 mins transaction time; no proactive contact
- 3 = 0-1 mins transaction time; no proactive contact
- 4 = 1-2 mins transaction time; proactive contact
- 5 = 0-1 mins transaction time; proactive contact

All of the banks had a strong focus on basic process efficiency with cashiers in all cases (with the exception of Bank 5 where paying in cash took more than one minute) being able to deal with basic transactional business very quickly. However, in none of the banks was our mystery shopper asked if he had other financial needs he wished to address or any other business he wished to transact.

Appointment Booking (Branch)

Figure 5 shows how we scored the banks on the appointment booking process.

Figure 5: Relative bank performance on Appointment Booking (Branch)



"I was told that if I wanted to see someone to discuss my financial needs straightaway I should 'go over there and wait in the corner'. I did so and was eventually approached by a junior member of staff. I got the impression his motivation was less to understand how he could help me and more to make sure I wasn't casing the joint."

KEY

- 1 = No immediate appt offered; appt not available at time of choice; appt not waterproofed
- 2 = No immediate appt offered; appt not available at time of choice; appt waterproofed
- 3 = No immediate appt offered; appt available at time of choice; appt not waterproofed
- 4 = No immediate appt offered; appt available at time of choice; appt waterproofed
- 5 = Immediate appt offered

There was a more significant variation in performance in appointment booking than in either of the other two measures we considered in the In-branch Experience. We awarded Banks 1 and 6 the maximum score due to the fact that in both cases our mystery shopper was offered an immediate appointment (however, as we will discuss in The Financial Review, the appointment was not always made with an appropriate Relationship Manager and did not necessarily have a positive outcome for the customer).

Some of the other banks fared less well. At Bank 2, the process of booking an appointment only took two minutes, but the customer could not see a Relationship Manager for over a week due to diary restrictions. At Bank 3, the appointment booking process was relatively efficient. The member of staff took high level customer details and attempted to triage the researcher's financial needs. An appointment was available at the researcher's time of choice, but was not subsequently waterproofed.

At Bank 5 the member of staff undertook a fact-find at first point of contact and booked an appointment for the next day, but no waterproofing took place. We had a similar experience at Bank 8.

Conclusions

Our experience of customer service in the branch network was mixed. On the one hand, some of the banks efficiently processed the transactional business. They can also be forgiven for not attempting to drive out a sales opportunity from every customer interaction they undertake (if they did then the branch as a transactional forum would cease to exist). On the other hand, none of the banks attempted to solicit an opportunity for further customer contact from any of the interactions we offered them. Equally, some of them performed poorly at

some of the basics, specifically managing queuing times. Under such circumstances, customers could understandably want to leave the branch as soon as possible in spite of the best efforts of staff to engage them about their broader financial needs. Across the board, our research suggests there is room for improvement.

The Telephony Experience

Summary of Key Findings

- At only 3 of the 8 banks we surveyed did we have what we would view as a world-class experience of booking an appointment in branch over the telephone.
- At 2 of the 8 banks in the study the telephony operative with whom we spoke was not able to confirm a branch booking to our researcher. In each case, the customer was promised a call back to confirm the appointment, which was not forthcoming.
- Process efficiency and customer experience were both significantly better at banks which allow the customer to speak directly to someone in the branch of their choice. At one of the banks in the study, a telephony operative tried and failed three times to contact a member of branch staff and eventually abandoned the call.
- 5 of the 8 banks we mystery shopped attempted to pre-screen customer needs. In one of the banks that did, the customer's needs were incorrectly identified as being purely in the investments space, meaning that an opportunity to sell non-regulated products was lost.
- At bank 4 our researcher told the telephony operative that she held a current and a savings account with the bank. She was subsequently called by a Relationship Manager and was told that unless she wanted to take out an ISA, there was little point in them conducting a review "as she already held the products that were most appropriate to her needs". There was no discussion of her credit requirements.
- None of the banks we mystery shopped made a true waterproofing call to confirm the appointment.

Approach

In this part of the research process we set out to investigate how easy it is to secure a face-to-face appointment in the branch of one's choice and at the time of one's choice by going through the telephony channel. With so much talk in the industry about 'single view of the customer' and 'seamless multi-channel customer experiences', we wanted to understand how well two of the key channels talk to each other. As the main body of the chapter will show, our research threw up something of a mixed picture.

In relation to 'The Telephony Experience', we scored the banks on the following key areas:

- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** the ease with which our researchers could find an appropriate phone number to secure an in-branch appointment, the efficiency of the ID&V process and the ability of the bank to offer an appointment in the branch of the customer's choice and at the time of his choice:
 - How easy is it to find a phone number through which to book a branch appointment?
 - How efficient is the customer ID&V process?
 - How easily can central telephony operatives secure an appointment in the customer's branch of choice?
 - Is the experience of going through a central telephony function as good as speaking to someone directly in a branch?

- **Appointment Quality:** the proactivity of the bank in pre-screening the customer's requirements over the telephone, the desire of the bank to protect the quality of the appointment book by waterproofing the meeting and the ability of the bank to service the customer's financial needs through arranging an appointment with an appropriate Relationship Manager:
 - Are the members of staff who field such phone calls (be they in central telephony or in branch) able to identify customer needs and book an appointment with an appropriate Relationship Manager accordingly?
 - What level of commitment is there to maintaining the quality of the appointment book through waterproofing and is there a clear system in place between telephony and branch functions to ensure that this takes place?

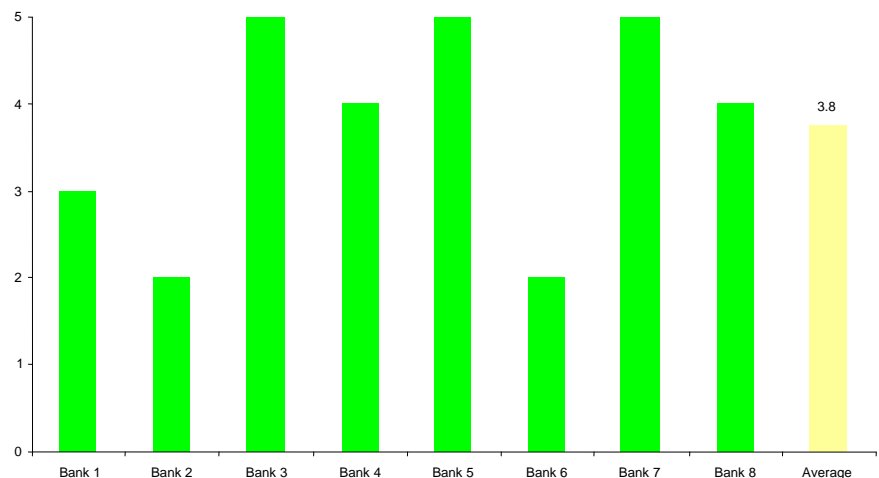
As in 'The In-Branch Experience', we have taken the data we gathered to respond to these questions and used them to attribute scores to each of the banks (using the 1 – 5 scale described in 'Methodology').

The remainder of this chapter presents our findings for these aspects of the Telephony Experience.

Appointment Booking (Telephony)

We scored the banks as follows on the basis of their Appointment Booking Processes in Telephony:

Figure 6: Relative bank performance on Appointment Booking (Telephony)



"I was put on hold 3 times whilst the customer services rep rang the branch to book an appointment. Each time they couldn't get through. In the end I was told I'd get a call back to confirm my appointment – this never happened."

KEY

- 1 = inefficient call process; inefficient ID&V; appt of choice not available
- 2 = inefficient call process, efficient ID&V / efficient call process, inefficient ID&V; appt of choice not available
- 3 = inefficient call process, efficient ID&V / efficient call process, inefficient ID&V; appt of choice available
- 4 = efficient call process; efficient ID&V; appt of choice not available
- 5 = efficient call process; efficient ID&V; appt of choice available

The worst performers on this metric were Banks 2 and 6. At Bank 2, our researcher was able to find an appropriate phone number and speak to someone in a central telephony function relatively quickly. However, the ID&V process was inefficient and excessively long, with the customer having to speak to two members of staff and to provide the same basic information (e.g. surname and title) to both. She was then offered an appointment in the branch of her choice at the time of her choice, but the central telephony operative could not see the diary of the Relationship Manager with whom the financial review would take place and was therefore not in a position to guarantee the appointment. A call back to

confirm the appointment was promised but this did not materialise. Overall, this was an unsatisfactory customer experience. The mystery shopper at Bank 6 fared little better. Again, the customer was told a call back would be required to confirm the branch in which and time at which the review would take place. No call back was forthcoming.

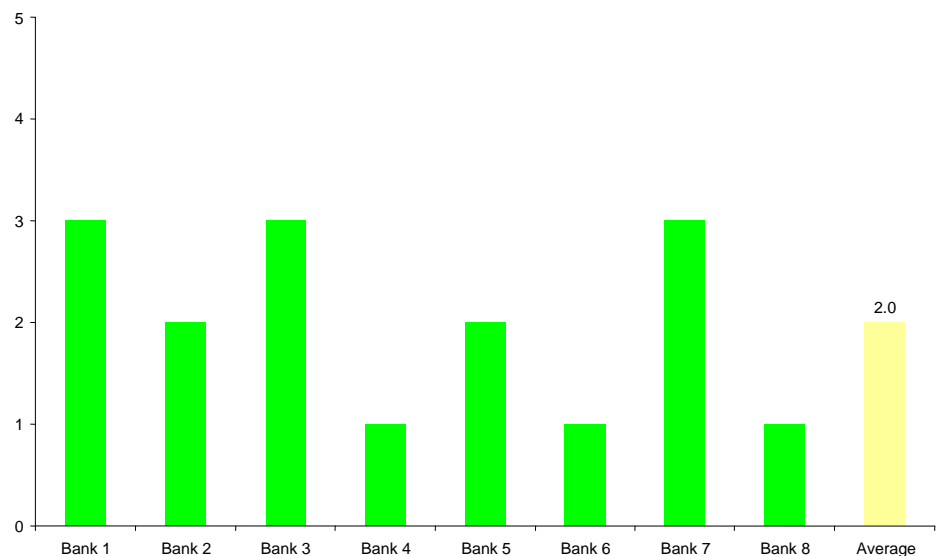
Some of the other banks achieved much better scores, but in some instances the numbers do not tell the full story. This was particularly true of Banks 4 and 8. All three scored highly in terms of the efficiency of the call and ID&V processes but fell down spectacularly in booking the appointment. At Bank 4 our researcher was twice promised a call back to confirm the time of the financial review and did not receive a call on either occasion. At Bank 8, the central telephony operative failed three times to get through to the branch to confirm an appointment. Eventually, the customer was offered a call back – which she never received.

Our experience at Banks 3, 5 and 7 was altogether more positive with the distinguishing feature of all three being that the customer managed to speak to someone directly in the branch of their choice and that the member of staff had instant visibility of the diaries of the Relationship Managers in their branch. However, as the next section will show, the customer experience from that point on often deteriorated.

Appointment Quality

Figure 7 shows how we scored the banks on Appointment Quality.

Figure 7: Relative bank performance on Appointment Quality



KEY

- 1 = no pre-screening; no waterproofing; inappropriate RM
- 2 = no pre-screening, waterproofing / pre-screening, no waterproofing; inappropriate RM
- 3 = no pre-screening, waterproofing / pre-screening, no waterproofing; appropriate RM
- 4 = pre-screening, waterproofing; inappropriate RM
- 5 = pre-screening, waterproofing; appropriate RM

We judged a world-class experience in Appointment Quality as including a strong pre-screening process (e.g. did the telephone operative manage to successfully identify high-level customer needs?), and an appropriate waterproofing call, resulting in an appointment with an appropriate Relationship Manager. A top score of 3 out of 5 shows that we discovered significant opportunities to improve performance in all of the banks researched.

“I told the person on the phone that I had a wide range of financial needs I wanted to discuss. I did mention an ISA, but I said I wanted to discuss credit as well. When I turned up for my appointment it was with a regulated seller and so when I wanted to talk about credit cards, he couldn't help me.”

Some headline observations are as follows:

- 5 of the 8 banks we mystery shopped attempted to pre-screen customer needs. In one of the banks that did, the customer's needs were incorrectly identified as being purely in the investments space, meaning that an opportunity to sell non-regulated products was lost.
- At Bank 4 our researcher told the telephony operative that she held a current and a savings account with the bank. She was subsequently called by a Relationship Manager and was told that unless she wanted to take out an ISA, there was little point in them conducting a review "as she already held the products that were most appropriate to her needs". There was no discussion of her credit requirements.
- At Bank 6, the customer's postcode was taken to identify the most appropriate branch in which to conduct a financial review but he was not asked for his preferred time and date for the meeting. The customer was promised a call back to provide details of the appointment, but no call back was forthcoming.
- None of the banks we mystery shopped made a true waterproofing call to confirm the appointment.

Conclusions

Our experience across the banks in interacting with the telephony channel was fundamentally one of frustration. When speaking to an operative in a central telephony function, we experienced significant difficulties in achieving the desired outcome, with the banks struggling either to contact a member of branch staff directly or lacking access to Relationship Managers' diaries.

The commitment to waterproofing and call-backs was mixed and, in one case, saw our researcher receiving a call to cancel the appointment due to the fact that the bank believed her financial needs were being met by the products she already held. Whilst some of the banks can be congratulated on a fairly sleek interaction between telephony and the branch network, the evidence of our research suggests that the days of 'single view of the customer' and 'seamless multi-channel customer experiences' are yet to come.

The Financial Review

Summary of Key Findings

- None of the banks in the study achieved a world-class score in all three areas of investigation within 'The Financial Review' – strict adherence to regulation, process efficiency and relationship building ability.
- Only two of the banks in the survey fully met their obligations with regards to disclosure and the limits of the advice their Relationship Managers were able to give.
- At five of the banks mystery shopped the Relationship Manager failed to explain his / her level of experience and qualifications to the customer.
- Only four of the banks in the study used an on-screen 'fact-find' to structure the discussion. Without a formal structure in place, the Relationship Managers tended to fail to identify the full range of the customer's financial needs.
- At only two of the banks we researched did the mystery shopper feel the financial review resulted in recommendations which responded fully to their financial needs.
- Relationship Managers at several of the banks failed to make the customer feel relaxed through positive body language with several of our mystery shoppers commenting that no eye contact was made, and, in one case, "the Relationship Manager gave the impression she wanted the meeting to end as soon as possible".
- We experienced both extremes of the sales process with our researcher at Bank 5 receiving a 'hard sell' for an unsuitable product and the Relationship Manager at Bank 7 missing clear buying signals and failing to discuss specific products at all.

Approach

In 'The In-Branch Experience' and 'The Telephony Experience' we mystery shopped the process of booking an appointment with a Relationship Manager. In 'The Financial Review' we assessed the face-to-face engagement between bank and customer itself. Even if a bank has the most efficient processes and delivers the best customer experience in its in-branch and telephony experiences, its sales performance will be poor if its Relationship Managers cannot make the most of the opportunities presented to them when they occupy the 'two feet of space' in front of a customer.

Although our research was not focused on assessing whether the banks were committing breaches in a regulated process, we were looking for areas of inconsistency in compliance across the financial review process, as a key hygiene factor.

Whilst much of the success of a sales meeting can be attributed to the skills of the Relationship Manager, process has a significant role to play. If a strong, well-thought-out sales process is in place, the Relationship Manager stands a far better chance of identifying the full range of the customer's needs in as time-efficient a way as possible.

If a bank structures its financial review processes correctly, it can create a framework which should enable a Relationship Manager to identify financial needs. However, just as a Formula 1 car will not win a race if a poor driver is behind the wheel, a bank will not convert financial needs into closed sales to a great degree if its Relationship Managers are not skilled in selling and in building relationships.

We therefore scored the banks (using the 1 – 5 scale described in 'Methodology') on the following key areas:

- **Legal & Compliance:** the Relationship Managers' adherence to their legal and compliance obligations:
 - Did they present their business card and clearly state their name and job title?
 - Did they talk you through an Initial Disclosure Document (IDD) outlining details of their personal experience, qualifications and level of authorisation to advise on financial services?
 - Did they present you with a Data Protection leaflet?
 - Did they explain the levels of service that can be provided and the purpose of the meeting?

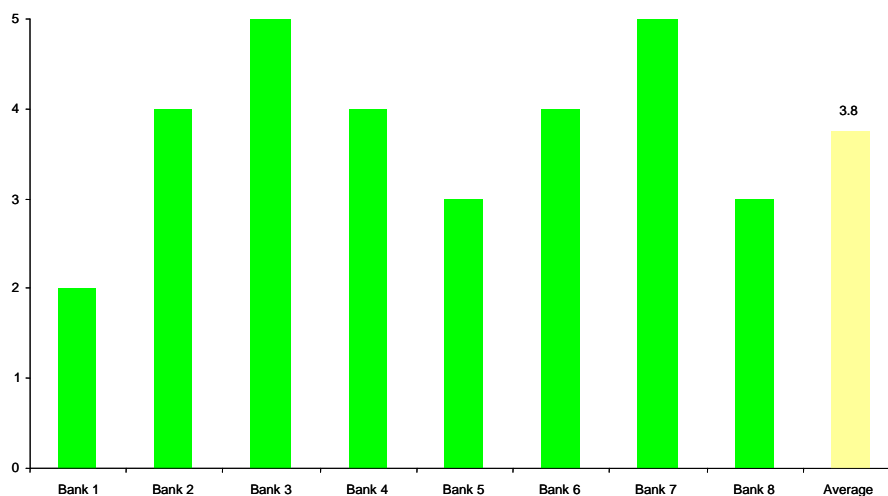
- **Process Excellence:** the Relationship Managers' ability to structure the Financial Review in such a way which creates an efficient and coherent customer experience and which is successful in identifying the full range of the customer's financial needs:
 - Was there a formal, structured 'fact-find' (either paper-based or on-screen)?
 - Did the bank have a structured approach to understanding both the customer's current product holdings and potential product needs?
 - Was there a logical, intuitive and smooth process without any significant procedural failures (e.g. systems breakdowns) or incongruities (e.g. a requirement for the customer to repeat information / resubmit information the bank already holds)?

- **Relationship Building:** their skill in identifying sales opportunities and their commitment to build and maintain long-term relationships:
 - How well did they build a rapport with you?
 - Did they make you feel relaxed and welcome through positive behaviours such as good body language?
 - Did they match appropriate products to the financial needs they identified?
 - How well did they focus on building a long-term relationship by agreeing next steps with you and diarising future appointments?

Legal & Compliance

We scored the banks as follows on their legal and compliance performance:

Figure 8: Relative bank performance on Legal & Compliance



“The Relationship Manager didn’t tell me anything about his own background or experience, he just talked about the billions of pounds of assets the bank has under management. It would have helped build credibility if he’d talked about himself more.”

KEY

- 1 = 0 / 4 of: business card; IDD; data protection leaflet; explanation of levels of service
- 2 = 1 / 4 of: business card; IDD; data protection leaflet; explanation of levels of service
- 3 = 2 / 4 of: business card; IDD; data protection leaflet; explanation of levels of service
- 4 = 4 / 4 of: business card; IDD; data protection leaflet; explanation of levels of service
- 5 = 4 / 4 of: business card; IDD; data protection leaflet; explanation of levels of service

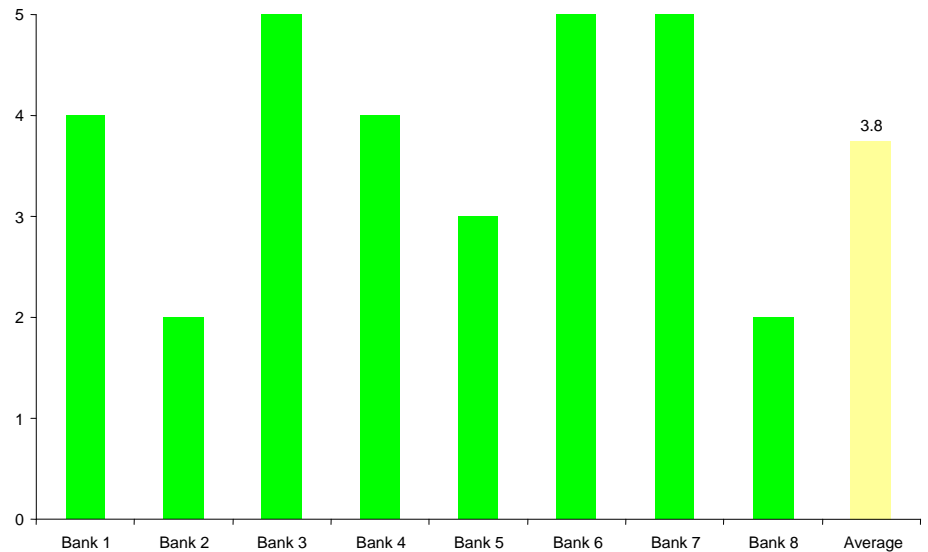
Banks 3 and 7 scored the maximum in this category, having met all four of our expectations. In the remaining six banks we had areas of concern. Given our small sample size, we refrain from seeing this as evidence of widespread legal and compliance issues. However, we would draw attention to the following:

- At Bank 1, the researcher was presented with a business card which gave the Relationship Manager’s name but not the job title. The customer was not informed of the Relationship Manager’s qualifications or experience and neither an IDD nor a Data Protection leaflet was provided.
- The Relationship Manager at Bank 2 ticked all of the legal and compliance boxes with the exception of explaining his qualifications and experience.
- The mystery shopper at Bank 4 was only given the Relationship Manager’s business card at the end of the meeting and was not provided with an IDD.
- The Relationship Manager at Bank 5 did not mention his qualifications and experience. No IDD was provided, although mention was made of the steps the bank would take to protect the customer’s information.
- Similarly to Bank 2, the Relationship Manager at Bank 6 met all of our expectations with the exception of revealing his qualifications and experience.
- The business card presented at Bank 8 did not state the Relationship Manager’s job title. No mention was made of his qualifications and experience, and levels of service were not discussed.

Process Excellence

We scored the banks as follows on Process Excellence:

Figure 9: Relative bank performance on Process Excellence



“The screen-based fact-find tool he used was quite sophisticated and showed various different scenarios for my finances. He also ensured that I saw what he was typing in so as to build trust. All in all it was a very thorough and structured discussion.”

KEY

- 1 = no formal factfind; no structured review; process inefficiencies
- 2 = no formal factfind; no structured review; no process inefficiencies
- 3 = formal factfind, no structured review / no formal factfind, structured review; process inefficiencies
- 4 = formal factfind, no structured review / no formal factfind, structured review; no process inefficiencies
- 5 = formal factfind; structured review; no process inefficiencies

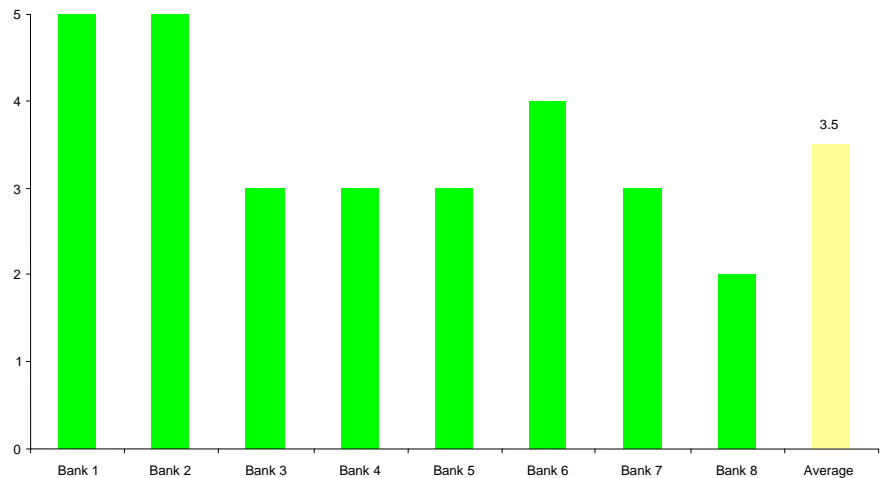
Banks 3, 6 and 7 scored the maximum. At Banks 3 and 7 our mystery shoppers were impressed that the meeting began with a review of his / her monthly current account in- and outflows to identify current product holdings and areas of potential savings before moving on to a more formal fact-find about his / her future product requirements. In both cases, the researchers remarked that the meeting felt well structured and run in such a way as to draw out his / her future needs in a time-efficient manner. At Bank 6, the researcher benefited from a structured discussion with modelling software used to capture data and run scenarios, which were followed up by a comprehensive report, which was posted to the customer after the meeting to detail next steps.

At some of the other banks, the experience was more mixed. For example, at Bank 5 the Relationship Manager ran the meeting using a print out of the customer's details. This proved to be out-of-date, resulting in the first part of the session focusing on updating basic information rather than identifying sales opportunities. At Bank 8 the Relationship Manager conducted the review as an informal discussion. With a lack of rigour in place, he focused purely on savings and investments the customer held with the bank and did not move on to discuss holdings elsewhere, thereby missing an opportunity to attract away funds to the bank. As a result of these process inefficiencies, at only 2 of the 8 banks we researched did the mystery shopper feel the Financial Review resulted in recommendations which responded fully to their financial needs.

Relationship Building

Figure 10 shows the scores we assigned to the banks on the Relationship Building skills of their Relationship Managers.

Figure 10: Relative bank performance on Relationship Building



“The Financial Adviser lacked the ability to understand my needs fully. He recognised that I wanted to invest my savings but my motivation for doing so – the why and how – was not covered in the review.”

KEY

- 1 = 0 / 4 of: attempt to build rapport; good body language; suitable product suggestions; focus on next steps
- 2 = 1 / 4 of: attempt to build rapport; good body language; suitable product suggestions; focus on next steps
- 3 = 2 / 4 of: attempt to build rapport; good body language; suitable product suggestions; focus on next steps
- 4 = 3 / 4 of: attempt to build rapport; good body language; suitable product suggestions; focus on next steps
- 5 = 4 / 4 of: attempt to build rapport; good body language; suitable product suggestions; focus on next steps

Having scored the maximum in both ‘Legal & Compliance’ and ‘Process Excellence’, Banks 3 and 7 both fell down on ‘Relationship Building’, emphasising the point that strong processes and a solid adherence to regulation alone are not sufficient to create a world-class customer experience and optimise sales potential. At Bank 3, the problem lay in the Relationship Manager’s lack of ability to understand the customer’s motivation for saving and his investment horizon. Bank 7 fell short by missing buying signals. The customer was potentially prepared to take up a product there and then in the first meeting. However, the Relationship Manager only went as far as providing some product materials and did not actively suggest a product to the researcher. The customer left the meeting with the feeling that it had taken a significant amount of time (90 minutes) and he had not emerged with a firm view as to which product(s) he should take out to meet his financial needs.

We assigned a maximum score in only two cases - to Banks 1 and 2. At Bank 1, our researcher was impressed with the Relationship Manager’s product knowledge, whilst at Bank 2 our researcher appreciated the fact that the Relationship Manager focused on suggesting strategies rather than products, i.e. she looked first at his financial needs, and only then at the products which she could consider selling to him. In some of the other banks, the impression left was far from favourable.

At Bank 8, our researcher commented: “She (the Relationship Manager) seemed in a hurry and gave the impression that she wanted the meeting to end as soon as possible”, whilst at Bank 5 the researcher experienced a ‘hard sell’ of a product which he repeatedly explained was not of interest to him.

Conclusions

It would be easy to be overly critical of the banks in relation to 'The Financial Review'. Customers and Relationship Managers alike are not machines and a review is a conversation, not an automated process. As a result, it would be unfair to expect a perfect outcome from every customer engagement. However, the fact that we identified significant issues at every bank we researched suggests there are real opportunities to increase the number of positive outcomes (i.e. sales) from financial reviews. In the case of some banks, this may require an investment in improving processes.

In others, most notably Banks 3 and 7, the challenge lies more in increasing the ability of Relationship Managers to build a rapport with customers and to close sales. Our sample size is not sufficiently large for us to be able to draw real conclusions as to the extent of adherence to regulation. However, the relatively high number of concerns we registered suggests legal and compliance issues remain a challenge across the industry.

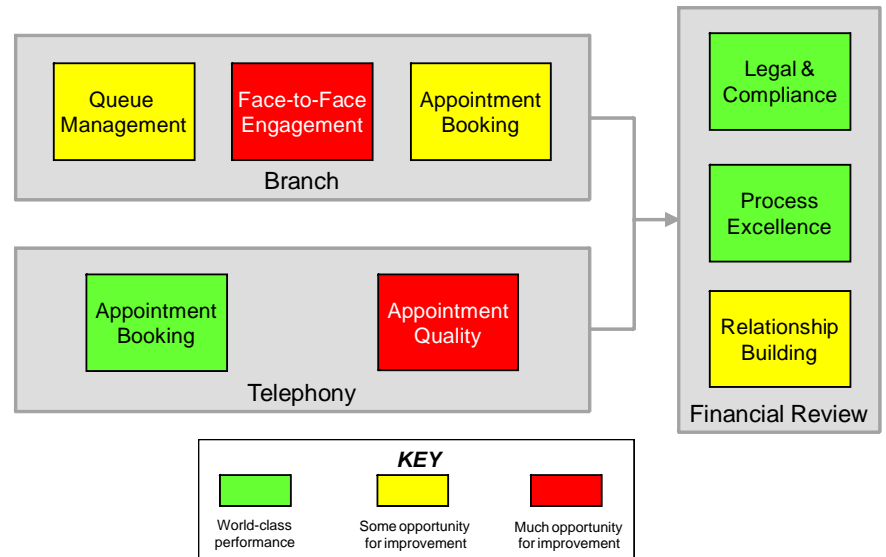
Overall Evaluation

Figure 11 below gives a consolidated view of the Aggregate Performance of all the banks surveyed, for each of the key areas assessed.

The colours were allocated as follows:

- red = aggregate score less than 3.0
- amber = aggregate score between 3.0 and 3.5
- green = aggregate score greater than 3.5.

Figure 11: Aggregate Assessment



The following summary observations were made about each area:

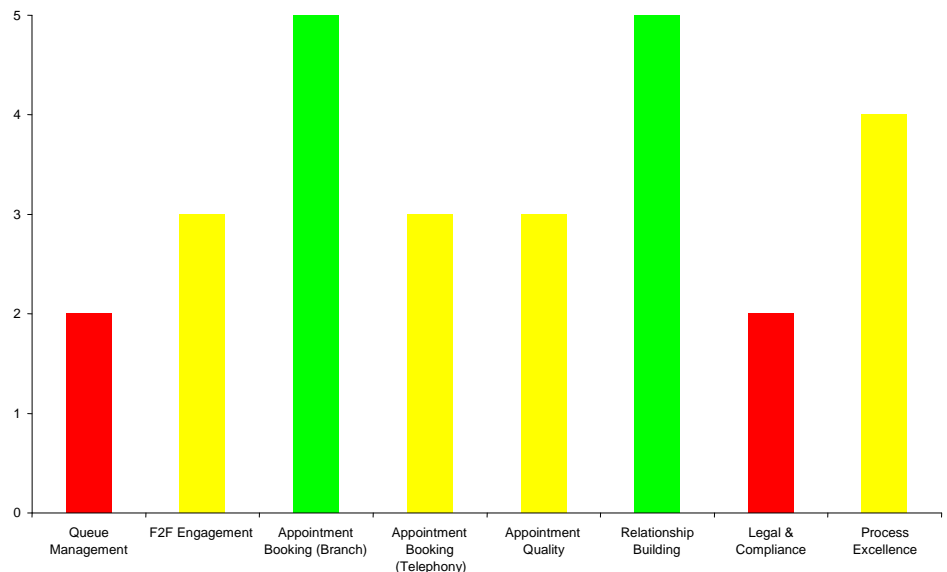
- **Queue Management:** variable results, with excessive waiting times and lack of proactive engagement accounting for the lower scores.
- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** consistently average results, with generally good process efficiency but poor sales-related engagement.
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** variable results, with waterproofing as the weakest area.
- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** generally average to good results; key shortcomings related to diary management and call-backs.
- **Appointment Quality:** average to poor results, with the omission of waterproofing a common problem, and some poor identification of customer needs.
- **Legal & Compliance:** generally average to good results, with most observations relating to individual mistakes, such as omitting to explain qualifications and experience.
- **Process Excellence:** generally average to good results, with most shortcomings arising out of informal or poorly structured meetings, which led to inadequate identification of financial needs.
- **Relationship Building:** variable results, with insufficient time spent building rapport and establishing customer needs, and too much pushing of products.

If there is a theme emerging from these observations, it is that the banks' processes generally work well, but there are failings at the individual performance level. It is not clear, from our limited research, whether these failings are due to shortcomings in capability, motivation, direction, or infrastructure; further research would be required to identify the root causes.

Appendix A – Summary of Findings by Bank

Bank 1

Figure 12: Summary of Key Findings, Bank 1



Key Strengths:

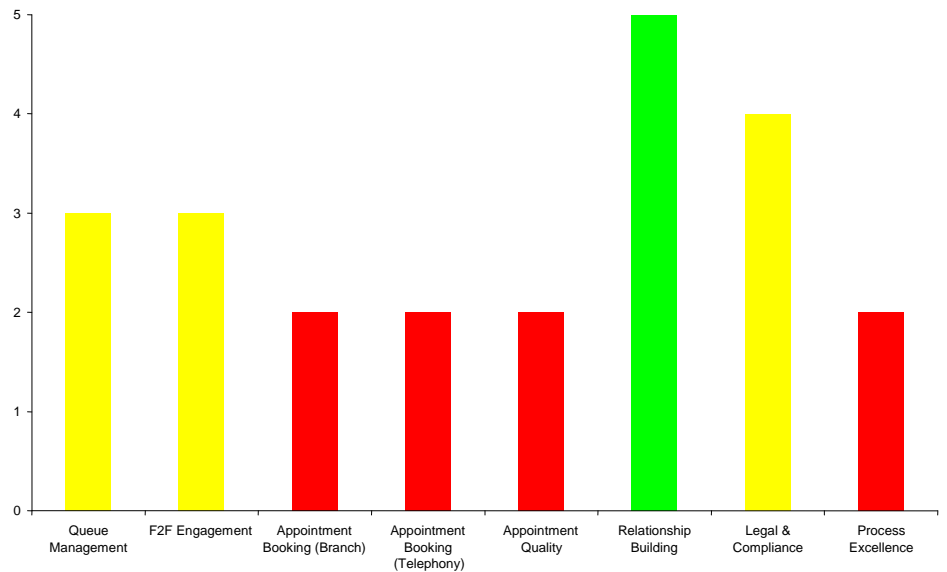
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** cashier was able to offer the customer an immediate meeting with a Relationship Manager.
- **Relationship Building:** Relationship Manager seemed experienced and exhibited good product knowledge.

Development Opportunities:

- **Queue Management:** only one of four available cashier windows was open, resulting in an 11 minute queuing time. No members of staff walking the floor to address customer needs whilst they waited in the queue.
- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** no attempt made to address broader customer needs at first point of contact (cashier). When told by the researcher that paying in cash was a simpler process at a competitor bank, the cashier suggested the customer use the other bank going forwards.
- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** 25 minute process which involved re-routing between offshore and UK operations.
- **Appointment Quality:** no waterproofing of the appointment.
- **Legal & Compliance:** business card which gave the Relationship Manager's name but not the job title. Customer was not informed of the Relationship Manager's qualifications or experience and neither an IDD nor a Data Protection leaflet was provided.
- **Process Excellence:** PC-based financial review, but the researcher still left with the impression that the meeting lacked structure and not all financial needs were explored.

Bank 2

Figure 13: Summary of Key Findings, Bank 2



Key Strengths:

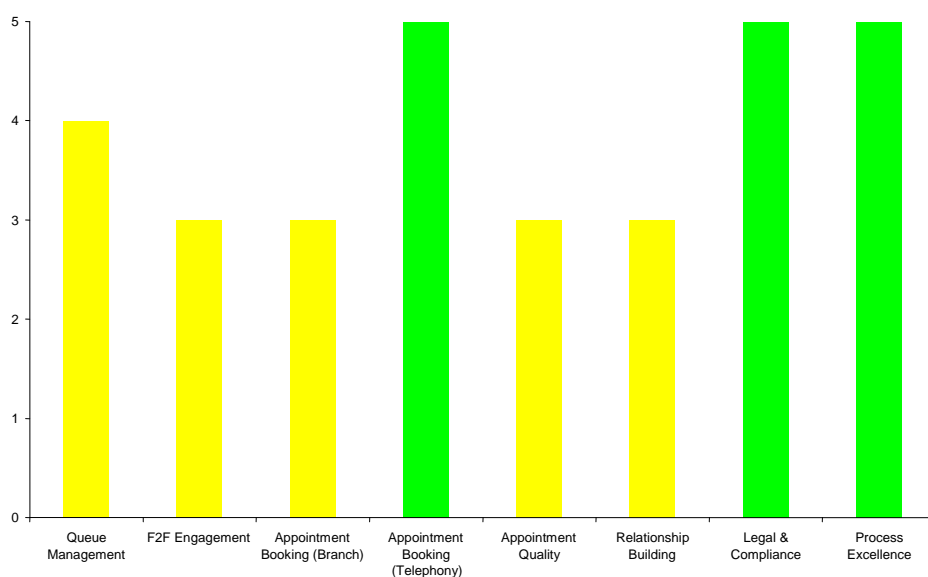
- **Relationship Building:** Relationship Manager focused strongly on financial needs, then defining strategies to meet them and only then suggesting products.

Development Opportunities:

- **Queue Management:** 8 minute queuing time and no approach from a member of staff walking the floor.
- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** strong focus on processing transactions as quickly as possible. No attempt to engage the customer about broader financial needs.
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** efficient appointment booking process but not able to offer the customer a meeting for a week. However, good waterproofing process conducted by the Relationship Manager and with a strong focus on pre-identifying the customer's needs.
- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** easy to find the relevant phone number, but an inefficient ID&V process. Customer required to speak to two members of staff and to submit information twice.
- **Appointment Quality:** appointment offered in branch of choice at time of choice, but telephony operative could not see the branch Relationship Manager's diary and therefore could not guarantee the appointment. Confirmation call promised but did not take place.
- **Legal & Compliance:** Relationship Manager ticked all of the legal and compliance boxes with the exception of explaining his qualifications and experience.
- **Process Excellence:** structured conversation and professionally managed, but using a paper-based fact-find.

Bank 3

Figure 14: Summary of Key Findings, Bank 3



Key Strengths:

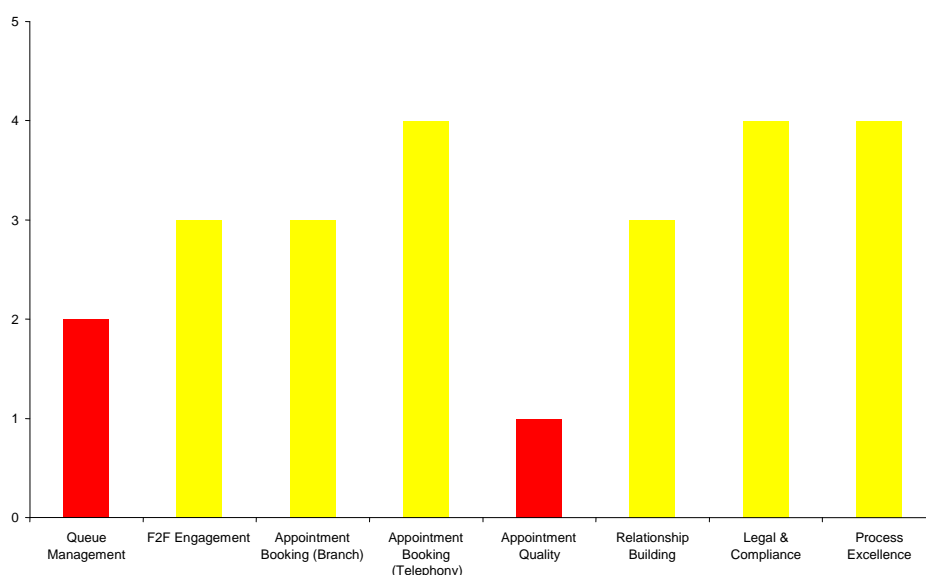
- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** customer able to speak directly to the branch. Member of staff able to confirm appointment at first point of contact.
- **Legal & Compliance:** all regulatory obligations met by the Relationship Manager.
- **Process Excellence:** meeting began with a review of current account in- and outflows to identify current product holdings and areas of potential savings before moving on to a more formal fact find about his / her future product requirements.

Development Opportunities:

- **Queue Management:** short waiting time, but no proactive approach from a floor walker whilst in the queue.
- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** strong focus on processing transactions, little focus on driving out other customer opportunities.
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** high level customer details taken and attempt made to triage the researcher's financial needs. Appointment available at the researcher's time of choice, but not subsequently waterproofed.
- **Appointment Quality:** good focus on pre-screening customer needs, no waterproofing.
- **Relationship Building:** Relationship Manager lacked ability to understand customer's motivation for saving and his investment horizon.

Bank 4

Figure 15: Summary of Key Findings, Bank 4



Key Strengths:

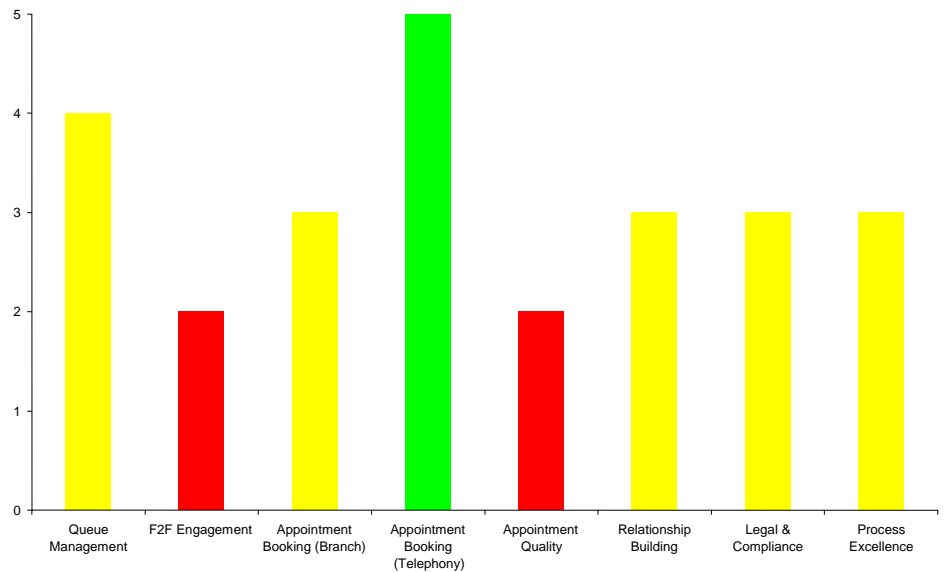
- Bank 4 did not score the maximum on any metric.

Development Opportunities:

- **Queue Management:** 14 minute queuing time and no member of staff walking the floor to triage customer needs.
- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** focus on operational efficiency in transaction management, little attempt to explore broader customer needs.
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** no attempt to pre-screen customer needs, appointment not available at the customer's time of choice ("we don't do lunchtime appointments") and no waterproofing.
- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** efficient appointment booking process, but appointment not available for 2 weeks. Good waterproofing process.
- **Appointment Quality:** researcher called by a Relationship Manager and told that unless she wanted to take out an ISA, there was little point in them conducting a review "as she already held the products that were most appropriate to her needs" (no discussion of her credit requirements).
- **Relationship Building:** satisfactory focus on financial needs and defining next steps.
- **Legal & Compliance:** business card only given at end of meeting, no IDD but leaflet on level of service, satisfactory explanation of level of service and data protection.
- **Process Excellence:** on-screen fact-find, but customer not told what details to bring to a second meeting, reducing its usefulness.

Bank 5

Figure 16: Summary of Key Findings, Bank 5



Key Strengths:

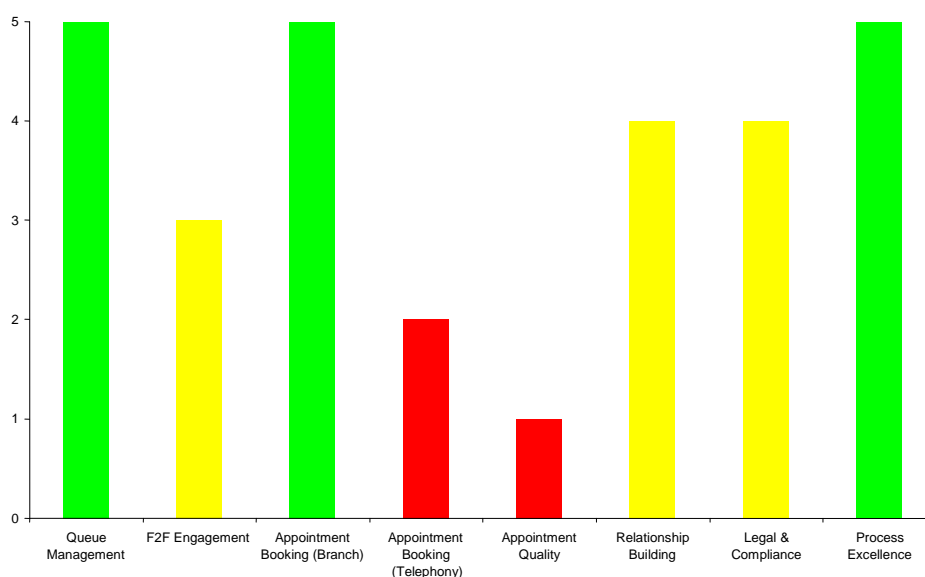
- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** customer could speak to someone directly in the branch of their choice, member of staff had instant visibility of the diaries of the Relationship Managers in their branch.

Development Opportunities:

- **Queue Management:** short waiting time in the queue, but no approach from a member of staff walking the floor.
- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** little proactive engagement around customer needs from frontline staff.
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** initial fact-find at first point of contact and appointment booked for the next day, no waterproofing.
- **Appointment Quality:** difficulty in finding phone number on bank website.
- **Relationship Building:** good focus on building initial rapport with the customer; limited attempt to understand current financial situation, more focus on pushing products.
- **Legal & Compliance:** no mention of qualifications and experience; no IDD was provided (although mention made of the steps the bank would take to protect the customer's information).
- **Process Excellence:** Relationship Manager ran meeting using a print out of the customer's details which was out-of-date, resulting in the first part of the session focusing on updating basic information rather than identifying sales opportunities.

Bank 6

Figure 17: Summary of Key Findings, Bank 6



Key Strengths:

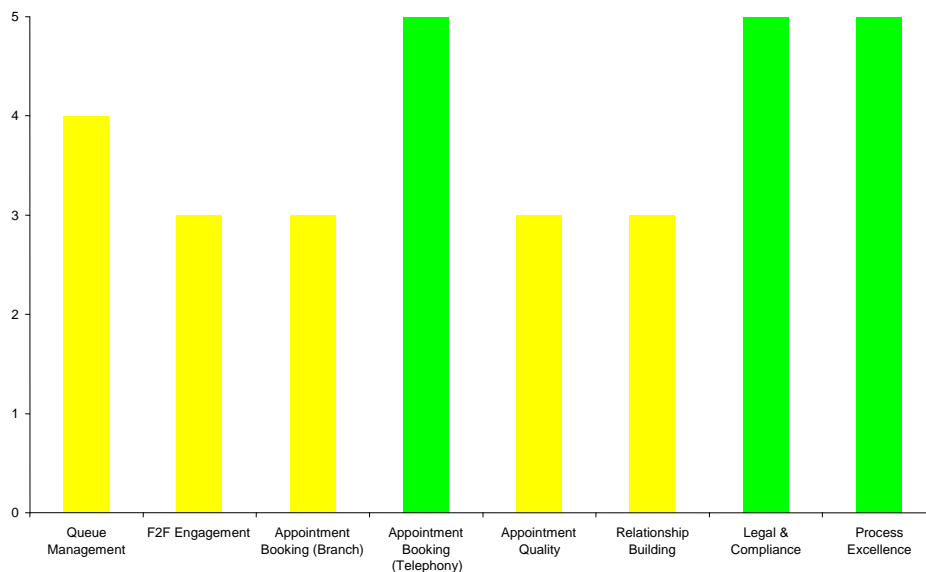
- **Queue Management:** customer approached by member of staff walking the floor after less than 3 minutes in the queue.
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** immediate appointment available if required (customer asked for a later date); next day appointment booked as requested; appointment waterproofed by the Relationship Manager.
- **Process Excellence:** structured discussion with modelling software used to capture data and run scenarios. Comprehensive report posted to customer after the meeting to detail next steps.

Development Opportunities:

- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** little proactive engagement around customer needs from frontline staff.
- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** customer told a call back would be required to confirm the branch in which and time at which the review would take place. No call back forthcoming.
- **Appointment Quality:** customer's postcode taken to identify most appropriate branch in which to conduct financial review, call back promised (but not made) to confirm details.
- **Relationship Building:** little attempt to build a rapport, Relationship Manager moved straight into discussing financial requirements.
- **Legal & Compliance:** business card, name, and title given. However, no discussion of Relationship Manager's background and experience, more of a focus on the size of the bank's assets under management.

Bank 7

Figure 18: Summary of Key Findings, Bank 7



Key Strengths:

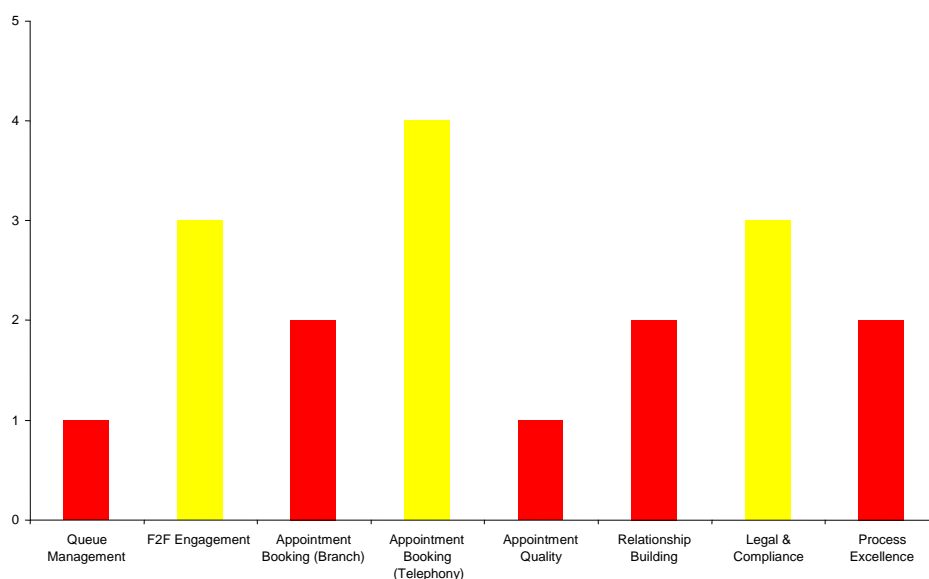
- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** customer managed to speak to someone directly in the branch of their choice, member of staff had instant visibility of the diaries of the Relationship Managers in their branch.
- **Legal & Compliance:** full regulatory requirements met.
- **Process Excellence:** meeting began with a review of monthly current account in- and outflows to identify current product holdings and areas of potential savings before moving on to a more formal fact-find about future product requirements.

Development Opportunities:

- **Queue Management:** short queuing time, no proactive approach from a member of staff walking the floor.
- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** strong focus on process efficiency.
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** appointment available at time of choice, no waterproofing.
- **Appointment Quality:** high-level pre-screening of customer needs, no waterproofing.
- **Relationship Building:** good rapport building and good body language, but no focus on developing the relationship through setting up a second meeting.

Bank 8

Figure 19: Summary of Key Findings, Bank 8



Key Strengths:

- Bank 8 did not score the maximum on any metric.

Development Opportunities:

- **Queue Management:** 20 minute wait at an unstaffed welcome desk.
- **Face-to-Face Engagement:** little focus on exploring broader customer needs, strong focus on process efficiency in transaction management.
- **Appointment Booking (Branch):** cashier able to book an appointment at the customer's time of choice, no waterproofing.
- **Appointment Booking (Telephony):** efficient ID&V process, but central telephony operative failed three times to get through to the branch to confirm an appointment. Call back then offered but not received.
- **Appointment Quality:** not able to book an appointment through Telephony.
- **Relationship Building:** "She (the Relationship Manager) seemed in a hurry and gave the impression that she wanted the meeting to end as soon as possible".
- **Legal & Compliance:** business card presented did not state the Relationship Manager's job title; no mention made of qualifications and experience; levels of service were not discussed.
- **Process Excellence:** Relationship Manager conducted the review as an informal discussion. Lack of rigour led him to focus purely on savings and investments the customer held with the bank and he did not move on to discuss holdings elsewhere, thereby missing an opportunity to attract away funds to the bank.

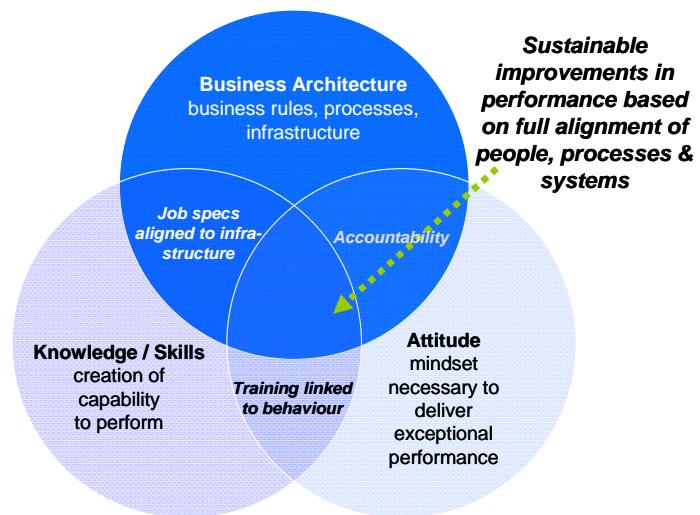
Appendix B – Our ‘Sales & Service Effectiveness’ Proposition

There are few things more frustrating than trying to improve the performance of sales and service people. For example, in our experience, up to 83% of a company’s revenue is generated by 20% of its sales force. What are the remaining 80% doing? What would be the upside if only some of the poorer sales people were transformed into superlative performers?

Hitachi Consulting has been helping Financial Services clients increase their Sales & Service Effectiveness for 15 years. We believe there are three core interdependent components which are necessary to materially change performance:

- Business Architecture: the systems and processes which your business uses to maximize sales and enhance the ‘customer experience’.
- Knowledge & Skills: the creation of the capability to perform.
- Attitude: the mindset necessary to deliver sustained exceptional performance.

Figure 20: Core components for Sales & Service Effectiveness



We have successfully conducted a number of assignments in this space with some of the world’s leading retail banks. Many of our clients in this space operate on the basis of requiring a four-fold return on any investment made in performance improvement and we have been comfortably able to meet this requirement in all cases.

Our Sales & Service Effectiveness team consists of a blend of high-quality career consultants and former banking professionals who have first-hand experience of working in this space in some of the world’s leading retail banks. We do not staff assignments with generalists or with inexperienced graduates.

We believe this combination of a tried and tested methodology and a team of experienced sector specialists makes us uniquely qualified to help you deliver the sustained improvement in top line performance you require.

For further information, please contact Neil Whittaker, Vice President – Banking, Hitachi Consulting (nwhittaker@hitachiconsulting.com).

Appendix C – About Hitachi Consulting

Hitachi Consulting is the global business and IT consulting company of Hitachi Ltd., and a widely recognised leader in delivering practical value-based business strategies and technology solutions. From strategy development through application deployment, we are committed to helping clients quickly realise measurable business value and achieve sustainable ROI.

Hitachi Consulting's value proposition

We bring the focus and energy of a small company, with the financial resources of a global player. Our consultants are specialists in many areas of Financial Services, including Life, Pensions, General Insurance and Banking, with backgrounds in distribution, operations and technology.

Our preferred approach is to provide a small number of true subject matter experts to fulfil critical roles. Our consultants will work with you, in joint teams, to develop practical solutions that meet your needs.

Our engagements focus on delivering specific outcomes which quickly reap measurable rewards to your bottom line. We bring a genuine “can do” attitude, and a real commitment to deliver knowledge and skills transfer to your people as they work with us.

Our Financial Services Practice

With deep industry knowledge and a balanced view of strategy, people, process and technology, Hitachi Consulting works with you to understand your business, develop clear strategies, and craft practical solutions to match your unique needs. These solutions quickly drive the measurable results you require, and help you to achieve and sustain competitive advantage.

We have formalised some of our proven, customisable solutions, of which the following are particularly appropriate in this “suspicion recession”:

- **Stability and Recovery** recognises that Financial Services organisations have to make a number of decisions to help them weather the recession and prepare for recovery. We adopt a balanced approach, specific to Financial Services, to ensure your organisation will survive the near term challenges and exploit the longer term opportunities.
- **Sales and Service Effectiveness** recognises that to achieve sustainable improvements in performance an organisation must align people, processes and systems. This is done by balancing Business Architecture, Knowledge and Skills, and Attitude. Together these elements combine to create the capability to perform and the mindset necessary to deliver exceptional performance.
- **Accelerated Cost Reduction** recognises that Financial Services organisations are facing growing barriers to remaining competitive during increasingly uncertain times. Our evidence-based approach to cost reduction begins with an analysis of where your costs currently lie, in order to understand which areas will yield optimum impact.
- **Post-Merger Integration** recognises that the recession will create new opportunities for some Financial Services firms to enhance their performance through acquisition. However, post-merger integration can be one of the most traumatic business activities. Our track record and well-tuned approach provide reassurance and pragmatic assistance at a time of high potential combined with high anxiety.

For more information on any of our services, please contact us.

Call +44 (0)870 850 6669 or visit <http://www.hitachiconsulting.co.uk>

Contributors

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Neil leads the European banking practice at Hitachi Consulting and has over 16 years' experience in financial services. He has worked at Lloyds TSB, HBOS (Clerical Medical), Barclays and Ernst & Young, in roles including HR Director, Sales Director and Sales and Marketing Director. He can be contacted at nwhittaker@hitachiconsulting.com

Richard Robinson, *Manager*

Richard is an experienced strategic thinker and project manager with experience across Retail, Commercial and Investment Banking. He specialises in leading client propositions and strategy development within the distribution environment, particularly in retail banking. He can be contacted at rrobinson@hitachiconsulting.com

Steve Wright, *Senior Consultant*

Steve is a business process specialist in the Financial Services practice. His assignments have covered topics such as operational strategy, customer journey mapping and business process re-engineering. He is a certified Six Sigma Green Belt and experienced in lean management techniques, incorporating them into a customer-orientated environment. He can be contacted at swright@hitachiconsulting.com

Rohit Mathur, *Consultant*

Rohit has a depth of field experience on strategy and process improvement based projects. He has led projects within the banking, insurance, alternative assets (private equity and hedge fund), administration, technology and outsourcing industries. He can be contacted at rmathur@hitachiconsulting.com

About Hitachi Consulting

As Hitachi Ltd.'s (NYSE: HIT) global consulting company, with operations in the United States, Europe and Asia, Hitachi Consulting is a recognised leader in delivering proven business and IT strategies and solutions to Global 2000 companies across many industries. With a balanced view of strategy, people, process and technology, we work with companies to understand their unique business needs, and to develop and implement practical business strategies and technology solutions. From business strategy development through application deployment, our consultants are committed to helping clients quickly realise measurable business value and achieve sustainable ROI.

Hitachi Consulting's client base includes 25 percent of the Global 100 as well as many leading mid-market companies. We offer a client-focussed, collaborative approach and transfer knowledge throughout each engagement.

For more information, call +44 (0)870 850 6669 or visit <http://www.hitachiconsulting.co.uk>

About Hitachi

Hitachi Ltd., (NYSE: HIT / TSE: 6501), headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, is a leading global electronics company with approximately 390,000 employees worldwide. Fiscal 2007 (ended March 31, 2008) consolidated revenues totalled 11,226 billion yen (\$112.2 billion). The company offers a wide range of systems, products and services in market sectors including information systems, electronic devices, power and industrial systems, consumer products, materials, logistics and financial services. For more information on Hitachi, please visit the company's website at <http://www.hitachi.com>