



5 ways

to help your business banker help you

BY AMY MORALES

Spring is the perfect time to dust off those books and see if there are any adjustments that can be made to help improve your business's bottom line. No matter what size or type of business you run, your bank – particularly your banker – is an important part of your team. Here are a few things you can do to make sure you get the most out of your relationship with your bank and your banker.

1. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT. It's always best to make an appointment if you want to speak to your banker. Business bankers are often out visiting clients or meeting with them at the branch. Setting an appointment will ensure that you get the most out of your time and your banker's. Some banks have even begun offering online appointment setting. And if you're unable to get away during bank hours, ask your banker if she'll come to you (keep in mind, though, that if you meet at the branch, you'll be able to discuss your finances without distraction).

2. SET THE AGENDA. While you're scheduling your appointment, set the agenda and ask your banker what paperwork you might need to bring (credit card statements, tax records, etc.). You can't expect your banker to know your business

inside and out in the same way you can't assume to know the bank's business inside and out. The more relevant information you have with you, the more efficient your meeting will be.

3. MAKE SURE THE PROCESS IS AUTOMATED. Keep in mind that the banker you choose may not be there forever – branch assignments change, people move to new positions. If your banker promises to waive any fees for you, ask to see the bank disclosure. If your account has to be manually adjusted by your banker every month, those adjustments may not be made when the banker moves to a different position.

4. BE SELF-RELIANT. Take notes and make sure your accounts and services are set up in such a way that you understand them. If you don't understand a particular term (such as BBDA) or product (such as Check 21), don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Consider setting up online access to all of your services and products so that access becomes more convenient for you.

5. USE YOUR BANKER AS A RESOURCE. Although your banker cannot speak to you about specific clients, she can speak about them generally. An experienced business banker has seen many different types and sizes of business, so she knows what others in your industry have done that works or doesn't work. Ask about what she's heard or seen. You might get some interesting new ideas that will ultimately improve your bottom line. **BA**