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Clear and consistent communication fosters a good banking relationship

September 15, 2011 - Connecticut

Great communication is the key to any important relationship in life. Having an open and regular exchange of information and ideas - with your spouse, family, and friends - is essential. The same common sense approach holds true in the workplace. Being committed to candid conversations with your employees or your manager, with your customers and prospects is critical to any successful endeavor.

Throughout my career, I've always believed that great banks - and great bankers - make clear and consistent communication as important to their business strategy as any product, service or solution they might offer their clients or prospects.

Successful communication cannot be two one-sided conversations. In order to truly understand the day-to-day concerns of a customer or business, it is important to listen as much as you speak. Reading a balance sheet or business plan of a company, you can come to know them. But by talking with a business owner or management team on a consistent basis, you get to know them as individuals. You grow to understand the challenges and opportunities of their business, regardless of their industry. Through regular communication with our customers at all levels of the organization, we are better equipped to provide strategic advice and counsel, to meet and even anticipate their needs in today's challenging environment. By deepening the relationship with a client, a banker can help a business develop a plan for three, six or eighteen months down the road.

Because small businesses have unique and diverse needs, at Citizens Bank we spend as much time listening to business owners as we do talking to them. We have to understand their business challenges and provide them with the products and services that best fit their needs. A great example of this approach is our accessMobile banking application, a product that has changed the way thousands of our customers do business.

Through accessMobile's easy-to-use and intuitive interface, Citizens Bank customers can approve pending transactions, view account history and transaction details, get current-day snapshots and perform intra-company funds transfers and receive alerts and bank mail - all from their mobile devices and in a secure environment.

We developed this product because we know from listening to our customers that they want cash management to be easier, more flexible, and more accessible. Having an in-depth understanding of our customers and how they prefer to work with us, we are providing them with exactly what they asked for.

The response to this product from our customers has been very positive. Customers are able to work remotely with greater productivity. Many customers have shared their experiences with us about accessMobile helping them work from home, their construction site, a hotel room or from a soccer game - as efficiently and effectively as from the office.

Earlier this year, Computerworld named Citizens Bank as a 2011 Honors Laureate in recognition of the successful development and launch of accessMobile. For more than 20 years, Computerworld has recognized organizations that create and use information technology to promote and advance the public welfare, benefit society and change the world for the better. We accepted the award as tremendous validation for our product and for the time and effort we put into communicating with our customers, which was an important part of its development.

It is our commitment to communication that is helping Citizens Bank become the bank of choice for small businesses throughout New England and across our footprint. Every day, we talk with and listen to our customers, and provide them with the tools they need to survive, thrive, prosper and grow.

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