



Making a Switch to Stay on Top

Rick Gobell, President
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Anyone who owns or manages a small business knows that the day-to-day tasks of running a company can consume all of your time. But, it's a fact of business life that advancements in technology are making previously unviable strategies possible... even critical... to long-term growth and success. And, subtle consumer trends may open you to new opportunities. So, in the spirit of "staying on top," here are several topics that may merit switching strategies.

The Digital Divide: A growing body of research is showing a performance gap between small businesses that successfully use technology and those that don't. This divide means small firms unable or unwilling to use new technology – including mobile technologies – are disadvantaged relative to their more technically savvy competitors.



Networked Organizations: Today's collaborative technologies are allowing businesses to easily increase their use of partnering, outsourced services and independent workers, such as freelancers, contractors, and consultants. As firms outsource functions that can be performed more efficiently by outside specialists, they can focus internal efforts on core, strategic business functions.

Telecommuting: It's a strategy that is being used more every year, so at some time you may wish to consider whether you can reduce costs by having some work done by employees from home.

Buying Local: more and more people are getting tired of the big box shopping experience (e.g. Target). The trend is to more shopping at small, local businesses. In addition, research has identified a growing consumer desire to know the person who owns a business. It makes attraction stronger and transactions more personal.

Green is Back: Although the recession dampened enthusiasm towards sustainable goods, services and business practices, consumer and employee interest in environmentally-responsible practices is making a comeback. Let your customers know of your "green efforts."



Get Ready for More Referral Marketing

No marketing tactic has the power of a personal referral.

That's why we appreciate the kind words you say about Drake Bank to friends and businesses. Your connections and referrals are very important to us.

It works in the other direction, too. We refer your business to others every chance we get.

But, we want to do better job of connecting your business to other clients of Drake Bank! So, we are planning a new feature on our website that will increase the number of referrals you get. Here is how it will work:

- (1) We add a prominent link on our home page called "Referrals"
- (2) Clicking on the "Referrals" link will bring the visitor to a page where each participating Drake Bank client will have a small "ad" prepared for you by a graphic artist (no charge)
- (3) Each "ad" will have all of the following features:
 - (a) Company name and/or logo
 - (b) A short statement about why you bank with Drake Bank
 - (c) A brief description of your products and services
 - (d) Contact information (link to your website, telephone, etc.)
 - (e) Any special offer you might want to make (optional)

This approach to helping bank clients work together is unique, and we intend to make it successful. And, "success" will mean nothing less than more contacts for your business.

Before we start, we need to know how many businesses would be interested. No commitment required. **Please send an email to Alexandra Borzo Faye (aborzo@drake-bank.com) saying you are interested in participating in "Referrals".** Thanks!





Spotlight on Drake Bankers

Jay Bajwa, VP, Commercial Lending

Annmarie Becker, AVP, Retail Lending

When I was a teenager I thought I would become a...

an army general. I grew up in an army family and developed the strength of character needed to be successful in any given situation.

landscape designer. During my years in high school I worked at a nursery selling plants. I then obtained a landscape technology degree.

My banking career began when...

a regional banking organization recruited me for my aptitude to understand business and work with people.

I realized that working outdoors included plowing snow! So, when I saw a "Teller Needed" sign at a bank 30 years ago, I applied. I was hired immediately.

What I like most about being a banker is...

the opportunity to serve the financial needs of my customers who vary both in style and need.
I enjoy finding solutions to their needs.

establishing rewarding personal and professional relationships. I enjoy listening to customer needs and providing direction and solutions. My goal is to develop long and trusted partnerships.

I relax by...

staying up-to-date on current events and the daily reaction of economic markets.

baking, riding my bike and being with family.

People and businesses bank here because...

they know someone will listen with interest and will try to help.

we strive to go above and beyond the needs of customers. It's not about opening an account; rather it's about partnering with them, today, and for the future.



612-455-3322 | www.ranieng.com

Susan Rani, President of Rani Engineering and a client of Drake Bank, graciously granted an interview for this article.

Rani Engineering is headquartered in Minneapolis, with offices in North Dakota and California. The company has played a major role in many of Minnesota's most significant construction projects, including the new 35W Bridge in Minneapolis, the Hiawatha and Central Corridor light rail lines, and the Weisman Art Museum expansion.

Susan Rani is the founder and President of Rani Engineering. When asked why she started her own firm, Susan explained that she was motivated by her own vision and by the fact that there was no engineering firm in Minnesota that was owned and run by a minority female. So, after gaining experience working with the Army Corps of Engineers, MNDOT and a private firm, she and a partner formed a company in 1993. A year later, Susan bought-out her partner and began growing Rani Engineering.



*Susan Rani, President
Rani Engineering*

In the beginning, Susan did all the business management while being personally involved in every project. Today, she is the primary marketing force for Rani Engineering, relying on her expert team to get the work

done. Although less of a factor today, one unfortunate challenge that occasionally arises is the expectation by those unfamiliar with Rani Engineering that her company is invited to bid on government projects because the company is owned by a minority woman. Susan deals with it, knowing that it is the talent and passion that her team brings to every project that awards Rani Engineering with contracts. The tagline for Rani Engineering is "Passionate Team. Customized Solutions"... a line written by the staff.

It's a hardworking staff, too. Rani Engineering is unique by being a single source for land surveys, civil engineering, and rail signal engineering. It delivers all three services with a staff of only 50. The next largest company to provide all three services has 9,000 employees!

Susan was born in South Korea, but she emphasizes that she is an American, by choice. She did not speak English until age 11, and much of her youth was spent living in a neighborhood near the University of Minnesota...the school where she would ultimately receive her degree in civil engineering.

Last year Governor Dayton appointed Susan to the Board of the Destination Medical Center Corporation (DMCC), a non-profit corporation established to develop a plan that would position Rochester and the State of Minnesota as a global medical destination for years to come.

Years ago Susan said "I was urged by a business associate to find a smaller bank... a bank that would listen and help us. I found that, and more, in Drake Bank. They are people-oriented professionals. Smart, empowered, and good communicators. I have regular talks with Rick Gobell, President, and sometimes with Scott Hutton, the past President who retired years ago. It's a great bank!"



Plans and Developments in St. Paul

Here are a few of the exciting things happening in St. Paul:

The Old "Bus Barn" Property

The city of St. Paul is promoting ideas for a major development of the former Metro Transit "bus barn" lot off Interstate 94, near Snelling and University avenues. The city's web site describes 10 acres owned by the Metropolitan Council, as well as an adjoining parcel. Discussions have also begun with the owner of the Midway Shopping Center, bringing the total potential development acreage to 34.5 acres.

Seven Corners Hardware

Opus Development Co. is planning a development on the site of Seven Corners Hardware, one block west of the Xcel Energy Center. A representative for Opus confirmed that the company is buying the site and an adjacent church, and intends to develop both as part of the same project.

Penfield Building

The new Penfield Building is open for tenants, and a Lunds grocery store will open on May 15th. The land was used as headquarters for the St. Paul Police Department, and the massive columns from the police building were retained to produce an impressive entrance to the Penfield. The \$62 million, block-long building is six stories tall and features 254 apartments.



Macy's Downtown Building

The sale of Macy's vacant building in downtown St. Paul to the St. Paul Port Authority is official. Macy's sold the block-long structure and adjoining parking ramp for \$3 million, with the expectation that the agency will find another buyer to move into or redevelop the property within the next year.

Central Corridor

The Green Line that will link downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota and downtown St. Paul is expected to debut June 14. It will run every day from about 5 a.m. to 1 a.m. The expected redevelopment of properties along the route is well underway.



Saints Ballpark

In spite of delays caused by design changes and unexpected site clean-up, the new Saints ballpark in Lowertown will open on schedule. Construction on the \$63 million project is expected to begin in April, with the 7,000-seat ballpark slated to open for play in May 2015. The stadium will feature unparalleled access for special needs fans and interactive artwork, possibly an installation called "Meander," with 28 lighted sculptural pillars running along a retaining wall to represent the twisting course of the Mississippi River from St. Anthony Falls to St. Louis.



Successful Sales Meetings

Effective sales meetings are important to building and maintaining a great sales culture. Here are ways to make your meetings productive:

Start with an energizer. Begin your meetings on time and start with some fun. Reward those who are punctual.



Keep it simple. Ask yourself, "Does this item need to be in the meeting or could it be done outside the meeting?"

Control individual updates. Don't allow personal updates to wander or get off point. Long reports can sap the team's energy.

Motivate and reward. Build motivation into every meeting. The sales team needs to feel supported and recognized. This isn't about gifts. The simplest "thank you" can have great meaning.

Improve capabilities. Stretch and challenge team members' skills to keep them at the top of their game. Topics can focus on prospecting, networking, presenting solutions or closing.

Have a standard agenda. A consistent agenda will keep you on track. This will reduce your meeting preparation time dramatically.

John Milbauer Joins Drake Bank!

Drake Bank is pleased to announce that John Milbauer joined Drake Bank in mid February as Vice President, Commercial Lending, and brought his extensive banking experience to the needs of a growing bank and its clients!

John's career in banking has placed him in the forefront of almost every dimension of the banking industry. Among other roles, John has served as a commercial lender, bank president, chief credit officer, board chairman, and bank consultant. This broad and deep experience, coupled with his desire to listen and ability to understand business owners and managers, gives Drake Bank another force in our commitment to be the bank where small business is big.

John is a true "people person." Just ask him about his children! And, he is a true banker. Just ask him for assistance!

You may connect with John at 651-767-9818 (direct), 612-940-9367 (cell), or by email at jmilbauer@drake-bank.com.



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Genus:
Spring
Flower

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



NEIGHBORHOOD
DEVELOPMENT
ALLIANCE
481 Wabasha St.
Saint Paul
651-292-0131
www.nedahome.org

The Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA) is a non-profit corporation located in St. Paul. Its mission is to strengthen the vitality of neighborhoods by improving the availability of good quality housing. NeDA has been responsible for constructing or rehabilitating over 200 units of rental and ownership housing.

include financial counseling.” NeDA's bilingual (Spanish and English) staff serves about 750 low and moderate income residents a year. Seventy-five percent are Spanish-speaking and live within the 7 county metro area.

New construction and housing rehabilitation, however, still remains an important component of their operation. New homes, both ownership and rental, are planned for 2014 and 2015. NeDA is supported through a combination of foundation and governmental contracts.

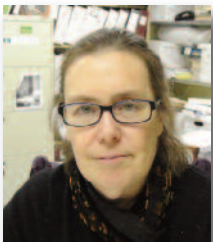


This twin home, built by NeDA, won the 2009 Sustainable St. Paul Award.

Steve Wellington, Jr., Chairman of the Drake Bank Board, was one of NeDA's founding board members. More recently, Rick Gobell, President of Drake Bank also served on the NeDA board.

“We appreciate the support of Drake Bank,” said Ms. Reid. “And, the Bank staff has always been so helpful. NeDA is fortunate to have such a great bank on our team!”

For more information on how NeDA may be of assistance to you, call 651-292-0131 or visit their web site (www.nedahome.org). NeDA also has a blog about classes and news at nedahomeblog.org.



*Karen Reid, NeDA
Executive Director*

Karen Reid, Executive Director of NeDA, explained that the mission of the corporation has not changed since it was formed almost 25 years ago, but they have adjusted their focus as dictated by the economy and local needs. “We started primarily as a developer, but now NeDA is also a certified HUD-Counseling agency providing pre-purchase and foreclosure prevention services,” said Ms. Reid. “In the past six years, we have expanded to

