

## EXCEPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE & STRONG SALES TEAM: IMPROVED RETENTION & AWARD-WINNING CULTURE

### About Centier Bank

Since 1895, Centier Bank has been a family-owned and managed financial service provider. The current President, Michael E. Schrage, is the fourth generation to oversee the daily operations of the bank. Centier is focused on providing world-class service and stands firmly behind this commitment to their associates, clients, and the communities they serve in northern Indiana. With 44 branch locations, Centier is currently serving in more than 22 communities with about 700 associates and more than \$1.9 billion in assets.

In the early 1990's, Michael wanted to develop a strategic process to attract the best talent and build a culture founded on the values of integrity, respect, friendship, caring and loyalty. During a conversation with a colleague discussing the direct impact talented employees had on customer relationships and company performance, he learned of the behavioral assessment tool Predictive Index® (PI®).

In 1992, after meeting with Michael Wohl, a consultant for Oliver Group, a PI Member Firm, and experiencing the PI firsthand, Michael Schrage made the commitment to use the insight from the Predictive Index for all hiring, including the use of the PRO (Performance Requirement Options), which defines the requirements of the job in behavioral/Predictive Index terms. He also realized the tool's value for team building and as a first step in establishing a corporate culture. As a team building tool, the PI® would help the managers improve overall communication and create a more harmonious environment amongst team members, and as a result, improve retention. Anyone who managed people: executive team, branch managers and department managers, attended the PI Management Workshop™ where they were trained in analyzing the PI information.

### Strong Job Fit

The CEO knew the impact having the right people in the right jobs would have on the productivity and performance of the bank. It was important to achieve strong job fit for both current and future employees. The bank's HR department created a PRO job profile for each position at the bank, and compared the PI's for each person with the PRO. Carol Highsmith, Senior Partner with the bank, found that the PI results for several employees in the commercial lender role were not in line with the PRO for that job, and who also happened to be low performers. This insight provided the managers a road map to what they needed to do

*"For 17 years, we've relied on the insight from the Predictive Index® to hire the right candidates, place people in the right leadership roles and continue to be a strong financial services organization. The Selling Skills Assessment Tool and Customer Focused Selling have allowed us to focus on building long term relationships with our clients, resulting in improved client service and revenue." Carol Highsmith, Senior Partner, Centier Bank*

in the area of coaching and training to help turn their performance around and improve motivation. In the end, some of the lenders made it and some did not. According to Carol, all hires for this role whose PI matched the PRO for the commercial lender role have been very successful at Centier Bank.

## Team Building

Centier Bank has invested heavily in using the insight from PI to build better relationships within the bank. It all starts with the team leaders. The process includes:

- Review PIs for all team members
- Discuss individual performance issues
- Discuss current team issues
- Develop strategies to improve harmony among the team members
- Coach team for improved motivation and drive

With this knowledge in hand, a culture was starting to form based on employee satisfaction, open communication and improved retention. The Predictive Index has helped employees understand themselves and how their behavior and communication style impact others in the organization- better communication drives respect.

## Retention

Being so close to major cities such as Indianapolis and Chicago has made hiring quality people difficult. Michael, Carol and team approached this challenge by focusing on making a strong hire right from the start and developing these employees for peak retention. By using the insight from the PI to tailor their interview questions, they were able to determine the best fit for the job and for the culture of the bank. In 1992, turnover at the bank was at 17%-20%. Today, Centier Bank boasts a rate of 10%, which is significantly lower than the regional and state levels. Centier Bank also has more people today with 10+ years with the bank than at any time in its history.

Carol shares, "Because we compete with the major cities for talented people, it is important that we retain our employees and promote from within. We use PI to help us identify high potential talent and strategies to develop them for future success."

## Succession Planning

Centier Bank prides itself on providing growth opportunities for their employees. When Centier Bank is looking to fill a key position, not only do they look at the PIs in relation to the role but also at the behavior and communication style of the manager. In a recent example, the bank was looking to replace a long time senior manager. In looking at the PRO for the position, it became clear to the hiring team that adjustments needed to be made to the behavioral requirements of the job based on the PI of the reporting manager. The new manager would report to an executive who is fast paced, takes the initiative, is competitive and impatient with routine. For this manager to be successful, they would need the ability to stand firm on their recommendations and need little direction. True to their culture, Centier tried to find an internal candidate

for this role, but in the end hired an outside person whose PI matched the updated PRO for the position and has worked out very well.

### **Integrity-Customer Service**

Centier Bank is known in the business for its high level of customer service. To ensure strong performance levels, they employ “Secret Shoppers” for their retail and call centers, as is custom for many banks. The service also conducts phone screens. Based on their feedback, Centier’s customer service levels remain steady at a 93%-95% acceptance level, with some branches consistently achieving a 100% rating, unheard of in the banking business. When asked what has attributed to these results, Carol cites the PRO. “By developing strong job models for our positions and adhering to these guidelines, we have the right people in the customer facing roles, resulting not only in improved levels of service and performance, but internally in the areas of improved morale, communication and more effective teams.”

### **Sales Solutions**

The commercial lending group is the cornerstone of the banking business. In an effort to support Centier’s goal of providing premier customer service, Michael Wohl suggested the use of PI Worldwide’s sales solutions: Selling Skills Assessment Tool™ (SSAT) and Customer-Focused Selling™ (CFS) sales training. The SSAT provided the insight into the lender’s selling strengths and identified areas for improvement. The findings showed that the commercial lenders were not asking enough investigative questions and therefore unable to identify additional needs of the customer. The results created a real awareness at the individual and team level, creating a platform for effective coaching from the managers.

According to Carol, it all comes down to the right people in the right jobs and providing managers with the best information possible to build effective teams. “The insight that the Predictive Index provides into employee behavior has allowed us to build our corporate culture and live it every day.”

### **Best Company to Work For**

Centier Bank has been named Best Place to Work by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce for three consecutive years, moving up in the ratings every year: first year ranking number 10, the year after that number 5, and for 2009, they achieved the number 4 spot for large companies in Indiana.

The nomination process includes the Chamber using an outside firm to conduct an online survey with random employees. The results speak for themselves, attesting to the bank’s high morale level and successful development of a strong culture of integrity, respect and loyalty.