



Since 2005, the MBA Emerging Markets Task Force has focused on Spanish speaking markets in Minnesota and how banks can better serve this growing customer base. In an effort to pass along their valuable information and ideas, MBA News will regularly feature this new "Emerging Markets" column.

A Marketing and PR Blitz, *en Español*, for Franklin Bank's New Branch

by Kerstin Furneisen

This month's *MBA News* focus on marketing and public relations (PR) coincides with a great example of these topics in action (with an emerging markets twist). Franklin Bank is gearing up to open a new branch in the heart of the Hispanic community in Minneapolis. Their marketing and PR activities offer a thorough example of a cross cultural marketing campaign.

In April, several customers of Franklin Bank residing in Mercado Central, a Hispanic and Latino business district, will be just across the street from the bank's new location on Bloomington Avenue and Lake Street. Even though they have already been working with both residents and businesses in this community for some time, Franklin Bank has covered quite a lot of ground with their marketing efforts. Along with translating their brochures and bank newsletter into Spanish, they have also translated part of their Web site and phone system to include Spanish as an option.

Dorothy Bridges, President of Franklin Bank said, "Any communication that we do in English to the public we will also do in Spanish because we want to really be a part of that community. Dorothy also added,

"While we expect word of mouth to be very good, we can't discount the value of having printed material that people can easily pick up and learn about Franklin Bank and its services."

The bank's PR efforts have also been thorough. Over the last couple of months they have been working closely with local Hispanic and Latino media outlets including advertisements on Radio Rey and in the bi-monthly Spanish paper *Gente de Minnesota*. Bank staff have also been networking at events sponsored by the Hispanic Chamber and Latino Communication Network.

Ruben Rodriguez, commercial loan officer at Franklin Bank, has been hitting the pavement and meeting with both business owners and community groups in the area. His main marketing tools have been a two sided, English/Spanish flyer announcing the new branch and other brochures that promote products that are specific to this location. Three of these products include ITIN loans (for both consumers and business), account opening with ITIN numbers or Matricula cards, and a low fee money transfer service, *Directo a México*. It is this service, offered by the Federal Reserve Banks that has generated the most excitement about the new branch.

Rodriguez said, "Everyone has been glad that we are going to be offering *Directo a México* because the currency exchange takes place here in the States so the customer's family is getting the most for their dollar." Another great selling point of *Directo a México* is its fee. As other money transfer companies will charge a percentage of the money sent, a bank offering *Directo a México* can send a minimal flat fee, again, saving the sender money. As a large portion of the Mexican population continues to send their money back home, a product like *Directo a México* will generate more business than a savings account. With this in mind, Ruben added, "We decided 'Why don't we help them put their savings where they usually send it: to their families in Mexico.'"

Many of Franklin Bank's employee's are fluent in Spanish, including the nine that will work in the new branch. Rodriguez has been speaking Spanish his whole life as his mother, a native of Mexico, came to the US when she was a teenager and became a Spanish school teacher. Bridges talked about her bilingual employees, "I can't tell you what a great feeling it is to walk down the aisle and overhear Ruben and Rich [Esquivel, Vice President of Commercial Lending] speaking to a customer in Spanish. I hear it every day, literally, and that's a great feeling."

Good timing is always a great friend of marketing and PR. Franklin bank plans to have their grand opening the week of May 5-9, during the Cinco de Mayo celebration. ■



Since 2005, Directo a México,[®] a product of the Federal Reserve Banks, has increasingly become the standard in account-to-account payments between the U.S. and Mexico. It has helped U.S. financial institutions capture a larger part of the rapidly growing U.S. to Mexico remittance market. This program is also a great benefit to bank customers as it provides a secure, fast, low-cost and convenient money transfer product.

Benefits of Directo a México:

- The low cost fees (generally less than \$5 to the consumer)
- Competitive foreign exchange rate
- The funds are available in the receiving account in Mexico on the next banking day
- Compared to the rates in a December 2005 study by the Applesseed Network entitled "Creating a Fair Playing Field for Consumers: The Need for Transparency in the U.S.-Mexico Remittance Market, the Directo a México rate would have resulted in the transfer beneficiary receiving an additional 55 pesos (approximately \$5 USD) on a USD \$350 payment.

Today Directo a México is offered in around 350 financial institutions located in 42 states. A Web page was recently introduced to help consumers understand how it works and locate a provider: www.directoamexico.com



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